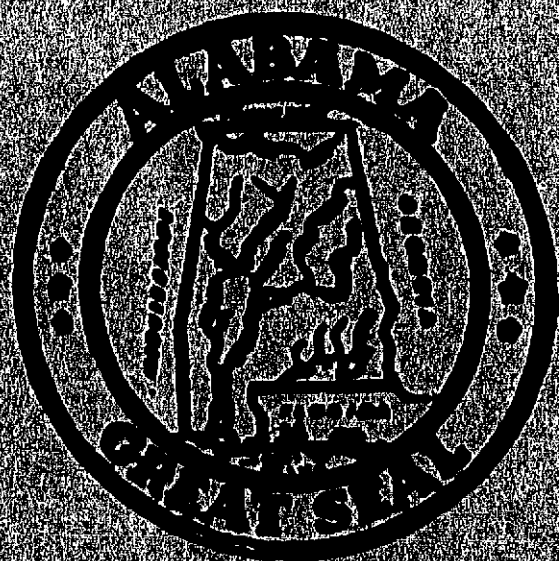


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THE AMERICAN MISSIONARY ASSOCIATION AND NORTHERN PHILANTHROPY IN RECONSTRUCTION ALABAMA

by

Loren Schweninger

"The results of attempts by . . . the missionary societies to educate the negro in Alabama," wrote Walter Lynwood Fleming at the turn of the century, "were almost wholly bad"¹ "Northern missionaries were religious fanatics,"² he continued, "who cared little about social questions [and] . . . paid no attention to the actual condition of negroes and their station in life." Fleming concluded that philanthropic organizations had a permanent influence for evil in the state of Alabama during Reconstruction.

In the light of evidence now available this negative view of Northern philanthropy in Alabama is untenable. The aid extended by non-sectarian organizations, denominational societies, the Peabody Education Fund and benevolent individuals to Alabama's freedmen, though limited when compared to other Southern states, provided Negroes with necessary schools, clothing, books, and food. The American Missionary Association, aided by the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, commonly called the Freedmen's Bureau, financed secondary and normal schools, relief stations, colleges, and sent hundreds of missionaries and teachers to help build new edu-

¹Walter Lynwood Fleming, *The Civil War and Reconstruction in Alabama* (New York: 1905), 464-468, 626-627.

²Henry Lee Swint agrees with Fleming on this point. He writes, "practically all Northern teachers in the South were religious to the point of fanaticism. The American Missionary Association specified that its teachers must be fired with missionary zeal. They must be men of fervent piety." James McPherson quotes Swint, supporting the theme that teachers were fanatics who had formed the backbone of the abolition movement, and "became dauntless leaders of an educational movement which was the natural sequel and supplement of their first crusade." Henry Lee Swint, *The Northern Teacher in the South, 1862-1870* (Nashville, 1941), 36. James M. McPherson, *The Struggle for Equality: Abolitionists and the Negro in the Civil War and Reconstruction* (Princeton, New Jersey, 1964), 392.

cational institutions for Alabama Negroes.³ Furthermore, many Northern missionaries were not religious fanatics, and their efforts in Negro relief, education, religion, economic self-improvement and journalism illustrate their deep concern for the actual condition of freedmen.

Northern philanthropy in Alabama was a small part of the national movement to aid the freedmen in the South during and after the Civil War. With the capture of Port Royal, South Carolina, the National Freedmen's Relief Association of New York City, the Educational Society of Boston, and the Port Royal Society of Philadelphia came into being.⁴ Grant's victories in the West in 1863 stimulated the birth of the Western Freedmen's Aid Commission in Cincinnati, the Cleveland Aid Commission, and the Northwestern Freedmen's Aid Commission at Chicago.⁵ 1864 witnessed the start of the African Civilization Society⁶—officered and managed entirely by colored people.⁷ A year later the Pittsburgh Freedmen's Aid Society sent out missionaries and the New York Ladies' Southern Relief Association packaged clothing, shoes and cloth for distribution in the South. In addition, church groups such as the Methodists, Presbyterians, Baptists, and Quakers carried on extensive freedmen's aid.⁸ The Methodist Episcopal Church (North) at

³The titles of "missionary" and "teacher" were used interchangeably in the literature of the period and are synonymous. The *Freedmen's Record* recorded in April, 1865, "By the word teacher is not meant those solely who are expected to teach the ordinary branches of school education. Some never enter a school edifice." *Freedmen's Record*, I (April, 1865), 1.

⁴*The American Freedmen*, I (June, 1866), 37.

⁵*Ibid.*, 38.

⁶John W. Alvord, *Seventh Semi-Annual Report on Schools and Finances for Freedmen*, January 1, 1869, 54.

⁷*Ibid.*, 55.

⁸*Senate Executive Documents*, 39 Cong., 2 sess., no. 6, 11. Report of Wager Swayne, Assistant Commissioner of Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands for Alabama, October 31, 1866. A union of many aid societies occurred in May, 1865. "To secure greater harmony of action among the friends of the colored man," the *Freedmen's Record* read, "to give unity and added effectiveness to the movement now on foot in his behalf, and to insure a more judicious and economical expenditure of the means employed for his benefit, the New England Freedmen's Aid Society, and the Pennsylvania Freedmen's Relief Association, and the Baltimore Association for the Moral and

first distributed supplies to Army camps for relief. Later, under John Morgan Walden, it sent missionary preachers and teachers to assist the recently emancipated slaves.⁹ By 1872, this organization employed seventy-five missionaries in the Southern states, and was responsible for over 11,000 pupils.¹⁰ The American Baptist Home Mission Society sent fifty ordained ministers "to labor exclusively for the colored people" during 1866.¹¹ The Quakers of Philadelphia organized the Friends Association for the "aid and elevation" of Freedmen. By 1867, the executive board boasted of thousands of garments, yards of material, pairs of shoes and stockings that had been sent to [southern cities].¹² The Presbyterian Church at the North likewise established schools, planted academies, seminaries, and churches, in behalf of the "lately enslaved African Race."¹³ In all, seventy-nine major aid associations, and innumerable small church and private societies were organized before the Con-

Educational Improvement of the Colored people constitute themselves a general Association—The American Freedmen's Aid Union." *Freedmen's Record*, I, May, 1865, 79. A year later further amalgamation took place when the American Freedmen's Aid Commission incorporated the Chicago, Cleveland and Cincinnati aid societies and became the American Freedmen's Union Commission. The secular philosophy of the AFUC caused disharmony among its members, and a short time later many societies broke away from the AFUC and pursued their own path of providing help to Southern Negroes. Alvord, *Fifth Semi-Annual Report* . . . , Jan. 1, 1868, 48.

⁹Miscellaneous Notes, John Morgan Walden Manuscripts [no date listed], University of Chicago.

¹⁰*American Missionary*, XVI (October, 1872), 231. Even across the Atlantic committees were formed "to assist the people of the United States with the difficulty of caring for the recently emancipated slaves." In London, for example, the Duke of Argyll inaugurated the National Freedmen's Aid Union of Great Britain and Ireland by a speech at the Westminster Palace Hotel, May 17, 1865. In that same year societies originated in Paris, Geneva, Zurich, Dublin, and Berne. Though diverse in motives, aims, and location, all aid societies shared one tenet—to assist Southern Negroes in their new found freedom. *Report of the National Freedmen's Aid Societies of Great Britain*, I (London, 1865), passim. *The American Freedmen*, I (June, 1866), 41-47.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 233.

¹²*Report of the Executive Board of the Friends' Association of Philadelphia and its Vicinity for the Relief of Colored Freedmen*, IV (Philadelphia, 1867), 11.

¹³A brief, factual description of the seventy-nine most important freedmen's aid societies can be found in: Julius Parmelee, "Freedmen's Aid Societies, 1861-1871," U. S. Dept. of Interior *Bulletin*, 1916, 268-294.

federate collapse. Though diverse in origins and location, their common resolve was to provide help for the homeless, hungry, and illiterate freedmen of the South.

In Alabama the need to aid Negroes was as great as in any other area of the South. Thomas Conway, a Union officer, in a letter to the president of the National Freedmen's Relief Association wrote, "The advance of the Army from Mobile upward [in the spring of 1865] was the occasion for the flight of nearly all the colored people from their homes. The roads are filled with thousands upon thousands. Their suffering weakens me . . . Many have starved to death . . . I see freedmen every day who come scared and bleeding from the brutal treatment of their oppressors. There was never presented to any people so vast a field for the exercise of benevolence. Clothing and learning must come from . . . the benevolent hearts of merciful loyal people."¹⁴

A year before Conway posted his letter the Western Freedmen's Aid Commission had appointed "intelligent and responsible agents" to distribute "goods" in Alabama.¹⁵ The agents canvassed army camps to ascertain the most needy areas and furnished them with books, clothes, and rations. This organization also sent missionaries to Talladega and Montgomery, Alabama, in 1865. Soon after, other societies sent representatives and material to aid blacks in Alabama. The Pittsburgh Freedmen's Aid Commission established five schools in the towns of Huntsville, Stevenson, Tuscumbia, Athens, and Selma,¹⁶ and the Cleveland Aid Commission sent missionaries and materials to the state in 1865. Major General Wager Swayne, head of the Freedmen's Bureau in Alabama, reported that the Cleveland Commission sent four teachers to the state in April, 1866. Six months later this active organization supported seven teachers and a matron in Montgomery and three teachers in Talladega.

¹⁴Letter from Thomas Conway, General Superintendent of Freedmen in Alabama, to F. G. Shaw, President of the National Freedmen's Relief Association, quoted in *New York Times*, June 6, 1865.

¹⁵Western Freedmen's Aid Commission, *Appeal in Behalf of the National Freedmen* (Cincinnati, 1864), 10.

¹⁶*Senate Executive Documents*, 39 Cong., 2 sess., no. 6, 11.

"Besides the pay and maintenance of these," Swayne wrote, "the commission has made quite liberal contributions of clothing and distributions to the destitute."¹⁷ The only other major non-denominational society to dispatch supplies and missionaries to Alabama was the Northwestern Freedmen's Aid Commission.¹⁸ This society contributed "ten packages of clothing" to Negroes at Huntsville, and secured a hospital for school purposes in Mobile.¹⁹

Numerous local organizations and benevolent individuals in the North also sent aid to Alabama Negroes. The Freedmen's Aid Society of Tallmadge, Ohio, contributed books, stationery, slates and money to various schools in Alabama.²⁰ C. P. Wheeler, a teacher in Eufaula, acknowledged, "The Readers came just in time and will be of great service. Many thanks to the Tallmadge Aid Society for your generous donation."²¹ The Ladies Benevolent Society of Burton, Ohio, sent articles of clothing, boxes of books, and "other necessities," to Josephine Pierce at Talladega.²² Mr. William P. Daniels of Worcester, Massachusetts, gave twenty-five dollars for the teachers home at Athens.²³ Mr. S. Parker of Bentwater, Michigan, donated one hundred dollars to a missionary school in Talladega,²⁴ and some people in Vermont presented \$112 to a school for colored children in Union Springs, Alabama.²⁵

¹⁷*Ibid.*, 12.

¹⁸*Annual Report of the Board of Directors of the Northwestern Freedmen's Aid Commission*, II (Chicago, 1865), 10, 11.

¹⁹*Senate Executive Documents*, 39 Cong., 2 sess., no. 6, 12-13.

²⁰Letter from Albert A. Safford to Erastus Milo Cravath, Secretary of the American Missionary Association, Talladega, Alabama, June 15, 1872, American Missionary Association Manuscripts, hereafter referred to as AMA MSS.

²¹Charles P. Wheeler to Edward P. Smith, Secretary, A.M.A., Eufaula, Alabama, October 31, 1868, AMA MSS.

²²Josephine Pierce to Erastus M. Cravath, Talladega, Ala., September 30, 1871. *American Missionary*, XVI (October, 1872), 229.

²³Carrie M. Blood to Erastus Cravath, Athens, Alabama, March 27, 1871, AMA MSS.

²⁴Josephine Pierce to Erastus Cravath, Talladega, June 29, 1872, AMA MSS.

²⁵William P. M. Gilbert to G. Pike, Tuskegee, Alabama, November 29, 1869, AMA MSS.

Though church groups, aid societies and benevolent individuals combined their efforts to assist Alabama freedmen, the amount of their help was small. Perhaps because of geographic isolation, or the fact that most of the Civil War battles were fought in Virginia, the freedmen in Alabama received less attention than other Southern states, until the American Missionary Association entered the field in 1867. Freedmen's Aid Societies based in Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, Cleveland and Chicago sent clothes, rations, books and a few missionaries to the state, smaller organizations contributed slaves and stationary, and charitable individuals afforded \$25 or even \$100 grants to freedmen in 1865 and 1866. But this was not great when compared to the assistance rendered other Southern states by Northern philanthropy during the same period. For instance, benevolent societies had founded eight schools in Alabama by late 1866. In the same period philanthropic organizations supported fifteen times as many schools in Virginia and North Carolina, and ten times as many in South Carolina, Georgia, Louisiana, Texas, Maryland and Tennessee.²⁶ After eighteen months of peace, Northern aid associations had commissioned thirty-one teachers to Alabama, compared to the two hundred commissioned to Virginia and the 148 to South Carolina.²⁷

²⁶John Alvord's report in 1866 includes the following table:

	No. of Schools (for freedmen)	Teachers (for freedmen)
Virginia	123	200
North Carolina	119	135
South Carolina	75	148
Georgia	79	113
Florida	38	51
Mississippi	50	80
Louisiana	73	90
Texas	90	43
Arkansas	30	28
Maryland	86	101
Tennessee	74	132
ALABAMA	8	31

The report noted that Alabama in some cases reported school systems rather than individual schools. The total number of schools and teachers still remained far below other Southern states. Alvord, *Second Semi-Annual Report*, July 1, 1866, 2.

²⁷*Mobile Advertiser and Register*, August 25, 1866.

Miss Ellen L. Benton, who taught at Hampton and Fortress Monroe, Virginia, from 1863 to 1867, and then moved to Tuscaloosa, protested, "I have been teaching in this place for three months. I cannot say I like it as well as Virginia . . . We have nothing to assist us to interest the children or to attract them to the school, and we feel a need of some of those things that are sent to the schools in Virginia."²⁸ Another missionary lamented, "The Northwestern Freedmen's Aid Commission have relinquished the field [here] having never in fact more than nominally occupied it." R. D. Harper, Superintendent of Education for the Freedmen's Bureau in Alabama, as late as 1868, pleaded, "We are almost daily in receipt of most urgent appeals [for missionaries and supplies] Cannot something additional be done."²⁹

The disparity of aid received by Negroes in Alabama as compared to other Southern states is further illustrated by the activities of the Peabody Education Fund. Endowed with one million dollars from George Peabody in 1867, the Fund sent money to individual school districts in the South until well into the twentieth century. Notwithstanding an exuberant editorial in the *Mobile Register* that proclaimed George Peabody "benefactor of the Southern people," and the initial optimism of Barnas Sears, the general agent of the Fund in the South, little help was forthcoming to Alabama.³⁰ The state received only a few thousand dollars a year between 1868 and 1872. In 1873, Alabama school districts accepted a total of \$7,000 for public education in five locations, while \$32,000 was distributed to fifty-eight cities and towns in Virginia.³¹ In 1874, the Peabody Fund granted Alabama one fourth of the amount given to

²⁸Ellen Benton to Edward Smith, Tuscaloosa, Alabama, July 29, 1867, AMA MSS.

²⁹R. D. Harper to George Whipple, Secretary, A.M.A., Montgomery, April 1, 1868, AMA MSS.

³⁰*Mobile Register*, Feb. 19, 1867. Sears explained to the Board of Trustees of the Peabody Education Fund in 1868, "Two considerations make it necessary to be somewhat liberal in our allowances for Alabama and Mississippi. One is they are far behind other states in interest in education, and require powerful stimulants; and they have not a great number of large towns, where alone [the Fund can be effective.]" *Proceedings of the Trustees of the Peabody Education Fund*, I (Boston, 1875), 108.

³¹*Ibid.*, 317.

Virginia.³² The next year, of the nearly one hundred thousand dollars expended by this Northern based organization, the states with the third largest number of Negroes in the United States got about three thousand dollars.³³ Every Southern state, with the exception of Florida, obtained more monetary aid from the Fund than Alabama.

Sears justified this maldistribution in a letter to the Alabama Superintendent of Schools. He scolded, "if the people do little we do little. If they do nothing, we do nothing. Several states are doing nobly now . . . I cannot specify any amount of Alabama."³⁴ Later he added, "the apathy of the people [of the state] seems to be quite as great as their poverty. For these reasons our contributions for Alabama are at present very limited."³⁵ The policy of the Fund, promulgated and supported by Sears, re-requiring schools "well regulated," continued for ten months of the year, and having regular attendance of not less than 85%, discriminated against states where poverty was greatest. Alabama, in urgent need of assistance, ironically received less than its neighbors.³⁶

Not only was the amount donated to public education in Alabama small, but aid to white schools exceeded that given to Negro schools. The official policy of the Fund, announced in February, 1871, called for payment to white schools enrolling not less than 100 pupils, \$300; 200 pupils, \$450; and two thirds of that rate for colored schools.³⁷ In general, because of inadequate appropriations and discrimination, the Peabody Education Fund accomplished little for Negro public schools in Alabama.³⁸

The two most significant sources of Northern assistance to Alabama's freedmen were the Freedmen's Bureau and the American Missionary Association. The bill that passed both

³²*Ibid.*, 368.

³³*Ibid.*, II, 16-18.

³⁴*Ibid.*, II, 68.

³⁵*Ibid.*, II, 169-170.

³⁶*American Missionary*, XVI (August, 1872), 184.

³⁷*Ibid.*, 183.

³⁸*Proceedings of the Trustees of the Peabody Education Fund*, I, 209, 256-258, 310-314, 377.

branches of Congress over President Andrew Johnson's veto, July 16, 1866, empowered the Commissioner of the Freedmen's Bureau in Alabama "to seize, hold, lease, or sell all buildings . . . as were formerly owned by or claimed and not heretofore disposed of by the United States government." The buildings were to be used for educational purposes, "whenever benevolent associations shall, without cost to the Government, provide suitable teachers and means of instruction."³⁹ It also instructed Bureau agents to cooperate at all times with private benevolent associations and teachers "duly accredited and appointed by them."⁴⁰ In short, as Bureau Assistant Commissioner Clinton B. Fisk stated, "benevolent and religious organizations will be afforded the utmost facilities in the establishment and maintenance of good schools."⁴¹

In Montgomery the Bureau appropriated \$10,000 for a school building just south of the Capitol in 1868. The colored people purchased the property, while George Stanley Pope, an American Missionary Association representative, supervised construction of the new school house, and became its first principal.⁴² General Swayne entrusted to one philanthropic organization four thousand dollars toward a school in Selma, and two thousand for a school house in Marion.⁴³ In Tuscaloosa, the Bureau paid rent on a "one room frame structure" for a missionary teacher.⁴⁴ Charles W. Buckley, the Superintendent of Education for the Freedmen's Bureau in Alabama, reported to the American Missionary Association "six thousand dollars deposited at Montgomery for purchase of the Talladega College, and the appropriation of twice that sum to Mobile for school

³⁹*The American Freedmen*, I (August, 1866), 77.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*

⁴¹*House Executive Documents*, 39 Cong., 1 sess., no. 69, p. 49. Letter from Clinton B. Fisk, Assistant Commissioner of BRFAL to War Dept., July 24, 1865.

⁴²*American Missionary*, XII (Sept., 1868), 200.

⁴³John Silsby to Erastus Cravath, Selma, Alabama, Feb. 26, 1867, AMA MSS.

⁴⁴Ellen L. Benton to Edward P. Smith, Sect. of A.M.A., Tuscaloosa, Alabama, Oct. 18, 1867, AMA MSS.

purposes."⁴⁵ On Sunday, April 11, 1869, missionary Thomas C. Steward dedicated a school building in Marion. It was built at a cost of about four thousand, two hundred dollars. The Bureau provided twenty-eight hundred dollars, while the colored people of Marion and the A.M.A. contributed the remainder.⁴⁶

In addition to providing buildings and paying rent for Negro schools the Bureau also paid teachers' salaries. Though the law forbade direct subsidy in this manner, Mr. Buckley in a note of appreciation to the A.M.A. stated: "I am sincerely thankful for all your association are [sic] doing for us . . . The bureau will see that they [the teachers] are paid and have good care."⁴⁷ An examination of the expenditures of the Freedmen's Bureau in Alabama illuminates the extent of Federal help. The Bureau spent \$156,941.10 for educational purposes in the state between 1865 and 1870. Of this amount \$116,297.62 went for rent, repairs and construction of school buildings, \$34,846.56 for salaries of teachers, \$1,307.48 for transportation of teachers, \$4,411.26 for salaries of superintendents and additional amounts for school books and furniture.⁴⁸

The American Missionary Association, unlike the Peabody Education Fund, centered its attention on the education, relief, and uplift of Alabama freedmen. Dating back to the fourth decade of the nineteenth century, the Association began as a committee formed to secure the release of forty-two slaves who had risen against their Spanish captors on the slave schooner "Amistad."⁴⁹ A generation later the organization became the most important society engaged in missionary and educational work among freedmen in Alabama. The number of teachers

⁴⁵*Twenty-First Annual Report of the American Missionary Association* (New York, 1867), 59. Charles Buckley, Superintendent of Education for the Freedmen's Bureau in Alabama to Erastus M. Cravath, Montgomery, Alabama, July 26, 1867, AMA MSS.

⁴⁶*American Missionary*, XIII (Aug., 1869), 172.

⁴⁷Elizabeth Bethel, "The Freedmen's Bureau in Alabama," *Journal of Southern History*, XIV (Feb., 1948), 69. Charles Buckley to Edward Smith, Montgomery, Alabama, April 26, 1867. *Ibid.*, May 17, 1867, AMA MSS.

⁴⁸Bethel, "The Freedmen's Bureau in Alabama," 89.

⁴⁹A.M.A., *Annual Report*, XXI, 11; XXII, 30.

sent to the state by the A.M.A. far exceeded the total of all other organizations. Similarly, the expenditures of the society in the state surpassed one million dollars, including missionaries', superintendents', and teachers' salaries, traveling expenses, books, lands, school houses, furniture, and physical relief to the sick and destitute.⁵⁰ In 1867, the *Annual Report* of the Association read: "Alabama has received less assistance from the American Missionary Association than its importance deserves. It is hoped that for the coming year the Association will have the funds to enlarge greatly the work in Alabama."⁵¹ In 1867, thirty-nine A.M.A. missionaries accepted commissions, and journeyed to Valhermosa Springs, Talladega, Selma, Girard, Athens, Demopolis, Marion, Mobile, and Montgomery, Alabama.⁵²

Similar to representatives of other Northern organizations, A.M.A. teachers endeavored to feed the hungry, care for the sick, and cloth the destitute. Simultaneous with the commissioning of large numbers of teachers to Alabama, an official described conditions as "truly alarming Destitution is rapidly on the increase throughout the state. The supply furnished by the government, though apparently large, is wholly inadequate to meet the pressing wants of the destitute. In some localities persons are reported to have actually perished from want of food."⁵³ A Northern newspaper account in 1867, titled "What has been done for the destitute people of the South?" depicted want in Alabama as "greater than any of the other states."⁵⁴ The United States government declared thirty thousand Alabama Negroes destitute in that year. Association teachers provided

⁵⁰*American Missionary*, XVIII (January, 1874), 12; A.M.A. *Annual Report*, XXII, 8.

⁵¹A.M.A., *Annual Report*, XXI, 51.

⁵²For yearly commissions of A.M.A. see *American Missionary*, XIII (May, 1869), 102-103; XIV (June, 1870), 124-125; XV (May, 1871), 98-99; XVI (May, 1872), 98-99; XVII (Sept. 1873), 196-197; XIX (Feb. 1875), 32.

⁵³Official reports and newspaper accounts vary as to the exact number of destitute in Alabama between 1865-1870. See *House Executive Documents*, 40 Cong., 2 sess., no. 1, 650-680, Report of the Commissioner of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands. *Baltimore American and Commercial Advertiser*, October 2, 1866; May 2, 1866; May 7, 1867. *New York Times*, Feb. 7, 1866.

⁵⁴*Baltimore American and Commercial Advertiser*, May 7, 1867.

some help, though little could be done on a large scale because of inadequate funds. John Silsby, whose remarkable career in the state covered a decade, provided rations for the needy in Selma. John Kimball established an "eating house" for destitute Negroes, and William Richardson distributed corn to needy families in Mobile.⁵⁵ J. Curry acknowledged "a cheque" for \$100.00 from the New York Southern Relief Association and applied it to "necessitous black families that are painfully destitute."⁵⁶ Moreover, A.M.A. teachers cared for the sick.⁵⁷ Besides the major epidemics of small pox, cholera, and yellow fever that swept the state periodically, inadequate diet and unsanitary conditions caused sickness among freedmen.⁵⁸ By November, 1867, the Freedmen's Bureau had established eight hospitals in the state. Missionaries worked in the "Bureau hospitals" as nurses, doctors' aides and administrators. Miss Eliza J. Ethridge of Dover, Illinois, and Miss Harriet Wiswell of Chicago cared for black patients at Riverside, five miles north of Mobile.⁵⁹ Others found employment in hospitals throughout the state.⁶⁰ Again, the number treated was small compared to the total number of Negroes that needed medical attention.

Along with caring for the starving and ill, A.M.A. teachers distributed clothing to the "imperfectly clad."⁶¹ John Coburn, Chairman of a House Committee investigating "Affairs in Alabama," reported "the appearance of the colored people in the state of Alabama is a silent and powerful witness to their poverty."⁶² and a teacher despaired that many scholars left

⁵⁵John Kimbell to Edward P. Smith, Mobile, Alabama, Feb. 12, 1870, AMA MSS.

⁵⁶Letter from J.S.M. Curry to New York Relief Association, Marion, Alabama, April 18, 1867, printed in Anna M. Holmes, *New York Ladies Southern Relief Association, 1866-1867* (New York, 1926), 46.

⁵⁷O. Gates to John Ogden, Benton, Alabama, Dec. 4, 1867, AMA MSS.

⁵⁸*Mobile Register*, March 1, 1866; *Senate Executive Documents*, 39 Cong., 1 sess., no. 27, Report of Assistant Commissioners of BRFAL (Wager Swayne, January 31, 1866); *Baltimore American*, March 22, 1866.

⁵⁹*American Missionary*, XI (Nov. 1867), 255.

⁶⁰A.M.A., *Annual Report*, XXII, 74-75.

⁶¹*The Annual Report of the Board of Directors of the Northwestern Freedmen's Aid Commission*, II (Chicago, 1865), 5; *American Missionary*, XIX (March, 1875), 57.

⁶²*House Report*, 43 Cong., 2 sess., no. 262. "Affairs in Alabama," 1865, 94.

school because they were "pitifully destitute of clothing."⁶³

Barrels and boxes of clothes were sent from the North to Association teachers in Alabama and distributed among the Freedmen. Miss Mary E. Smith of Emerson Institute in Mobile, dispensed "one barrel of clothing from the Benevolent Society of the First Congregational Church of Southwest Boyston, Massachusetts" to Negroes in the Mobile area.⁶⁴ Miss Josephine Pierce, a missionary at Talladega, doled out a box of bedding valued at \$125 from the Presbyterian Church of Canfield, Ohio, and a box of clothing from the Congregational Church of Tallmadge, Ohio, to Freedmen around Talladega.⁶⁵ In a like manner Mrs. Emeline M. W. Bassett, a teacher at Eufaula, Alabama, distributed a barrel of clothes among the poverty stricken. In a letter to Erastus M. Cravath, Secretary of the American Missionary Association, she described in vivid detail the conditions of poverty among the Freedmen, and her effort to alleviate suffering:

The good peo. of Middletown sent me a bbl. of clothing, some interesting cases came up in giving them out—but I suppose they are much the same as are constantly reported to you: one I think however was a little the saddest I have yet seen: We had very cold weather last week—the coldest this winter I think—one morning it was so severe that the thought of some warm little garments still left in the bbl. troubled one. For I knew there were plenty of little folks that needed them, so I wrapped myself up and started out with a big bundle in my arms to find them. I went to one poor old hut that I know—a few loose boards nailed together—a mud chimney at one end and the bare ground, usually muddy for a floor is the whole of it . . . I saw a sick woman lying upon a broken iron bedstead covered with very dirty rags. There was nothing else in the room except an old barrel with a board across it on which were two or three broken dishes, and an old chair . . . two or three little chips

⁶³*American Missionary*, XVIII (February, 1874), 36.

⁶⁴Mary E. Smith to John Strieby, Secretary, A.M.A., Mobile, Alabama, April 8, 1869, AMA MSS.

⁶⁵Josephine Pierce to G. Pike, Talladega, Alabama, Feb. 24, 1871, AMA MSS.

were smoking in the broken down fire place which a sad sickly looking little five year old boy had put there to keep his mother warm while he stood out of doors on the sunny side of the house to get the heat of the sun. The woman had consumption and had been [down] nearly a year. I left clothing and blankets for the mother and boy.⁶⁶

Mrs. Bassett's dramatic description of poverty near Eufaula, and her distribution of clothing, typifies the relief effort of A.M.A. teachers. This charity was not on a massive scale. Indeed, neither the state government nor the Freedmen's Bureau inaugurated large scale relief measures. If Mrs. Bassett and her co-workers failed to cure poverty in Alabama, they did alleviate the suffering of many freedmen.

Though disease and destitution existed among blacks in Alabama during the period, an over-emphasis of the "wretchedness" of Negroes is misleading.⁶⁷ The great number of Freedmen found employment soon after the end of hostilities and a few raised themselves to positions of wealth. One Montgomery planter stated "negroes never worked better than they are now doing."⁶⁸ Governor Patton, in his message to the legislature in January 1866, commented, "everywhere the freedmen seem to be entering into contracts for the present year and cheerfully and faithfully entering upon the discharge of the obligations contracted."⁶⁹ A month later a special correspondent for the *Nation* summarized his visit to Mobile: "The freedmen in this part of Alabama have almost all found work for the year, and already enter upon the performance of it. In the immediate neighborhood of Mobile the turpentine business forms the chief employment of the people; and for working in the orchards the men receive some ten, some fifteen, some even twenty-five

⁶⁶Emeline M. W. Bassett to Erastus M. Cravath, Eufaula, Alabama, Feb. 7, 1872, AMA MSS.

⁶⁷Fleming, 309, 312; Hilary Herbert, *Why The Solid South?* (Baltimore, 1890), 29.

⁶⁸*Senate Executive Documents*, 39 Cong., 1 sess., vol. 2, no. 27, 65.

⁶⁹*Mobile Register*, Jan. 18, 1866.

dollars a month.”⁷⁰ A newspaper article in the same city reported one Freedman worth \$30,000 in specie, and several others worth from \$10,000 to \$25,000. The article continued, “and we have further knowledge that on Friday last, four Freedmen purchased the valuable property on the corner of Royal and St. Anthony Streets for the sum of \$35,000, and received a deed for it. Two others recently purchased real estate to the amount of \$6,000, and the deed is on record.”⁷¹

Though Northern missionaries were concerned with feeding the destitute, caring for the sick, and clothing the poor, their foremost purpose was “to banish ignorance from the land.” Prior to 1868, the responsibility for educating the recently emancipated slaves in Alabama was largely in the hands of American Missionary Association teachers. Neither the provisional government, nor the state legislature of 1865-67, provided state funds for the support of Negro education.⁷² Even with the advent of Congressional Reconstruction public assistance was small. “In the present impoverished condition of Alabama,” wrote Edwin Beecher, State Superintendent of Education in 1869, “without any funds in the public treasury for the establishment of schools, but little can be done during the present year toward the establishment of public free schools throughout the state.”⁷³ Though the Radical Reconstruction legislature provided for a state board of education and a school fund administered by a superintendent of education, financial difficulties hampered their effectiveness.⁷⁴ For instance, many schools closed because of a lack of money in 1872, and as the nation slumped into a severe depression in 1873, the Alabama Board of Education closed all the public schools, except for a few in the large cities and towns “on account of the depleted condition of the state treasury.”⁷⁵ Thus, to a large extent, Negro

⁷⁰*The Nation*, II (New York, 1865), 209.

⁷¹*Mobile Register*, Feb. 18, 1866.

⁷²Horace Mann Bond, *Social and Economic Influences on the Public Education of Negroes in Alabama, 1865-1930* (Washington, 1937), 73-86.

⁷³Alvord, *Report*, Jan. 1, 1869, 27.

⁷⁴*Ibid.*, Jan. 1, 1867, 16.

⁷⁵*Proceedings of Peabody Trustees*, I, 422.

education in Alabama during the period 1865-1875 was directed by Northerners—more specifically, the teachers of the American Missionary Association.

A.M.A. missionaries organized primary, secondary, and normal schools, recruited Negro teachers, introduced academic curricula, purchased land and buildings for new schools, and in many localities brought Negro schools to a par with white schools.

William T. Richardson, A.M.A. Superintendent of Schools in Montgomery, bought the Trade House building in 1867. He gathered together five hundred scholars into a primary day school and two hundred adults into a night school.⁷⁶ Negroes learned to read and write, and soon attained “a proficiency” that was “truly cheering.”⁷⁷ At the same time, George S. Pope opened Swayne School in the state capital. A white gentleman remarked to a reporter from the *Montgomery Advertiser* that he was astonished at the proficiency of colored pupils at Swayne School.⁷⁸ The next year Pope started normal classes, and on September 5, 1870, fifteen colored teachers left by train to teach in nearby communities.⁷⁹ Ironically, they boarded the railway cars of the Montgomery and Mobile in sight of the Confederate Capitol, where Jefferson Davis took his oath, where the first Congress of the Confederate States of America met and sent their message to “open on Sumter,” and next to a brick wall still bearing the sign “Negro Brokers.”⁸⁰ In 1868, one observer described Negro schools in Montgomery “on a par” with white schools, shortly after the American Missionary Association began its work there.⁸¹ And a reporter for the *Chicago Tribune* remarked after witnessing “examinations” at Swayne School, “I have never seen scholars who have been in

⁷⁶A.M.A., *Annual Report*, XXI, 49.

⁷⁷*Ibid.*, 50.

⁷⁸*American Missionary*, XVIII (Sept., 1874), 199.

⁷⁹*Ibid.*, XIV (Sept., 1870), 22.

⁸⁰*Ibid.*, 199-200.

⁸¹George L. Putnam to Edward P. Smith, Montgomery, Alabama, Nov. 21, 1868, AMA MSS.

school for the same length of time do better. I am especially pleased with the recitations in grammar.”⁸²

In Selma, Marion, and Athens, Northern teachers reported similar progress. Thomas C. Steward mailed sketches of Marion's Lincoln Academy for Freedmen to the New York office of the A.M.A. In his first letter to the home office Steward referred to himself as a pioneer teacher, and described “pupils unused to books and school.” In a later correspondence he said, “three years ago the pioneer teacher in this place was constantly reminded of many difficulties Now the teachers in Lincoln Academy, with its pleasant well arranged rooms and well graded school, find their duties essentially such as they would in any union school at the North.”⁸³ At Selma a day school for colored children opened May 1, 1867.⁸⁴ For the first month it averaged only 15 pupils; the second month, 30; and the third, 50. In Athens, four lady teachers from Michigan taught four grades. The curriculum included first through fifth Readers, geography, grammar, arithmetic, Latin, and “higher branches.” Miss Mary F. Wells, of Ann Arbor, described her colleagues and students in glowing terms. “Supported by the American Missionary Association the ladies are doing great good,” she wrote, “not only in the school but among the free people outside the school. We have [started] a large school also at night in which all the teachers are engaged for the parents of our day school scholars.” I came here in 1865 [and since that time] there has been steady enthusiasm[,] . . . progress [,] and zeal.”⁸⁵

A week after the Civil War ended the Northwestern Freedmen's Aid Society, later a branch of the A.M.A., opened a graded primary school for Freedmen in Mobile. Within four months courses included reading, arithmetic, advanced English, and geography. An article in the *American Freedman*, the official organ of the American Freedmen's Union Commission, praised the school for “excellent discipline,” “rigid examinations,” and

⁸² *American Missionary*, XIX (Oct., 1875), 225.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, XIV, 200.

⁸⁴ Alvord, *Report*, Jan. 1, 1868, 32.

⁸⁵ Mary F. Wells to Edward P. Smith, Athens, Alabama, Feb. 18, 1867, AMA MSS.

“truly surprising progress by the majority of scholars.”⁸⁶ A year later, John Morgan Walden, Secretary of the Western Freedmen’s Aid Commission, reported “the Mobile primary schools are among the most successful under the commission.”⁸⁷ On January 7, 1868, the American Missionary Association with a large donation from Ralph Emerson of Rockford, Illinois, purchased a brick building four stories high, surrounded by four acres of garden, and fronting “on the most aristocratic street in the city.”⁸⁸ Supplied with modern furniture, it was equipped with a complete set of chemical apparatus, and rooms to accommodate eight hundred scholars. The editor of the *Mobile Advance* deemed, “the system of education now afforded the colored children of Mobile [not] inferior to the best advantages within reach of whites.”⁸⁹ In March, 1868, George Putnam became the first principal of Emerson School, named after its benefactor, and soon instituted college and normal courses.⁹⁰ Late in 1869, thirty colored teachers graduated with teaching certificates and began to establish schools for Freedmen in the community.⁹¹ Within half a decade, teachers from “Blue College”—the name students gave to Emerson—had taught over 3,000 black scholars.⁹² Moreover, the educational activities of the A.M.A. in Mobile, as elsewhere in Alabama, stimulated a free public school system for freedmen. Horace Mann Bond, the leading historian of Negro education in Alabama, writes, “What the Mobile board would have done for the education of Negroes

⁸⁶*American Freedmen*, I (Sept., 1866), 99.

⁸⁷*Ibid.*, I (May, 1866), 27.

⁸⁸*American Missionary*, XII (March, 1868), 61. Jacob Shipherd, an officer in the A.M.A. was sent to Mobile to purchase land and a school. He wrote, “Our transaction was consummated yesterday to the great satisfaction of all parties. . . . The Deeds will be sent to you as soon as recorded. . . . This property cost over \$50,000 and its possession gives us unexampled prestige in the whole valley.” Jacob Shipherd to Mr. Whitney, Mobile, Jan. 7, 1868, AMA MSS. A day later George Putnam sent a telegram to Edward P. Smith, “The college is ours, we have possession.” Telegram, George Putnam to E. Smith, Mobile, Jan. 8, 1868, AMA MSS.

⁹⁰George L. Putnam to Edward P. Smith, Mobile, Alabama, Jan. 18, 1869; George L. Putnam to the Secretaries of the A.M.A., Mobile, May 6, 1869, AMA MSS.

⁸⁹*Ibid.*, XII (March, 1868), 62.

⁹¹George Putnam to [J.] Strieby, Mobile, Alabama, October 10, 1869, AMA MSS.

⁹²*American Missionary*, XIX (Oct., 1875), 225.

without the presence of the American Missionary Association must remain a matter of speculation. With the Association present as a competing and stimulating agent, the Board was led successively toward the development of a system of free schools for Negroes."⁹³

At Talladega, where the Cleveland Freedmen's Aid Commission had maintained an "excellent school" since 1865, the A.M.A. founded the first college institution for Negroes in Alabama in 1867.⁹⁴ The "generous liberality" of Reverend L. Foster, of Blue Island, Illinois, supplied "in a large measure" the funds for the erection of a brick building sixty by one hundred feet and three stories high.⁹⁵ It was furnished with recitation rooms, classrooms, a chapel, and living quarters for fifty pupils.⁹⁶ The Twenty-Second Annual *Report* of the A.M.A. termed Talladega College "one of our best schools."⁹⁷ In 1868, Henry E. Brown, a Nebraskan and first principal of Talladega, organized a normal department and a recruitment program for Negro teachers.⁹⁸ He visited the nine adjacent counties seeking teachers, and told community leaders, "pick out the best specimen of a young man you have for a teacher, and bring to church with you next Sunday all the corn and bacon you can spare for his living, and I will take him to my school and make a teacher of him."⁹⁹ Not only did Brown muster promising students to become teachers, but on one occasion he took a tent "Just received from New York," four of his class, and went "among the mountains to help the people build a house for day school and church purposes."¹⁰⁰ "So day after day the men worked," he wrote from Kingston, "making shingles and hewing timber, . . . and now the school house chapel, 26 x 38 feet, is nearly done,

⁹³Bond, *Public Education for Negroes* . . . , 84.

⁹⁴Alvord, *Report*, July 1, 1868, 64.

⁹⁵*American Missionary*, XIII (March, 1869), 61.

⁹⁶*Ibid.*, (Oct., 1869), 224.

⁹⁷A.M.A., *Annual Report*, XXII, 65.

⁹⁸The nine adjacent counties, thickly populated with blacks, had no schools for freedmen. *Ibid.*

⁹⁹*Ibid.*, 65.

¹⁰⁰A.M.A., *Annual Report*, XXVII, 27; *American Missionary*, XVII (Nov., 1873), 256.

and already one of my helpers has gone to another field called the 'Cove' to help get shingles for another building."¹⁰¹ In 1869, largely due to Brown's initiative, two hundred students attended Talladega College and the normal class counted nearly fifty.¹⁰² In addition, colored teachers, trained at Talladega, established schools in remote areas. One wrote, "I went to Clay county. There was no preparation for a school and no school house. The white people were not willing to let the colored people have time to build. I found a colored person's house, and went in and began school with prayer. One Saturday we cut logs for a [school] house So we totes the logs and built a school."¹⁰³

Mr. Brown instituted an academic curriculum and a rigorous "set" of examinations. He initiated classes in Latin and Greek, geography, and grammar, arithmetic and "analysis."¹⁰⁴ One visitor remarked, after having witnessed the year end examinations, "the scholars show a really surprising power of analysis."¹⁰⁵ A Talladega newspaper praised the Negro college for being one of the most successful of the many institutions of learning established in the South by Northern philanthropists.¹⁰⁶ Ex-Governor Parsons, who visited Talladega, remarked that he was impressed with the capacities of the Freedmen and the "thoroughness" and "efficiency" of the instructors.¹⁰⁷ Similarly, Judge McAfee, who had resided in Talladega since 1833 and had served "as a trustee with the principle schools" in the antebellum period said, "I will content myself by saying that no institutions of learning [in Talladega] since that time [1833] to the present, equals this College, and that the worthy President and associate teachers are emintly [*sic*] qualified for their delicate . . . and responsible trusts."¹⁰⁸

¹⁰¹ A.M.A., *Annual Report*, XXVII, 29.

¹⁰² Henry E. Brown, to Edward Smith, Talladega, Alabama, Jan. 14, 1869, AMA MSS.

¹⁰³ *American Missionary*, XIV (Aug., 1870), 175-176.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, XVI (Aug., 1872), 178; (Sept., 1872), 199.

¹⁰⁵ Henry E. Brown to Dr. Taylor, Sect. of the American Bible Society, Talladega, Alabama, Feb. 18, 1869, AMA MSS.

¹⁰⁶ A.M.A., *Annual Report*, XXIX, 45, quoting Talladega *Our Mountain Home*, n.d.

¹⁰⁷ *American Missionary*, XIX (Sept., 1875), 196-197.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, XVIII (August, 1874), 73.

The educational work of A.M.A. missionaries among Alabama Negroes was impressive. Though they failed to "banish ignorance from the land," Northern teachers built schools, organized college and normal departments, obtained help from the Freedmen's Bureau, stimulated black enthusiasm for Negro education, and introduced academic courses and "rigid examinations." Schools were erected in over thirty locations under the direct supervision of Association representatives. College institutions for blacks opened their doors at Talladega, Montgomery, and Mobile and trained, Negro teachers planted schools in Black Belt counties where previously no educational opportunities existed for ex-slaves and their children. The curriculum of study in A.M.A. schools included a wide variety of courses, ranging from fundamentals in reading and writing to Latin and Greek. And far sighted Northern reformers in Alabama engendered a spirit of enthusiasm among freedmen for their own educational elevation. By 1871, the quality of colored schools in Mobile equalled that of white schools. Talladega Normal School was rated one of the best in the South by white citizens, and Swayne School in Montgomery enrolled nearly six hundred Negro scholars.¹⁰⁹

Though relief and education of Freedmen in Alabama were of primary concern to A.M.A. teachers, they also became involved in numerous other activities to aid blacks. Northern missionaries started churches and temperance societies, invested association funds, advanced various economic schemes, solicited the cooperation of white businessmen, and one became the first editor of the *Nationalist*, a Negro newspaper in Mobile. With rare exceptions, notably Thomas C. Steward, who was a state Senator, and John Silsby, a member of the 1867 constitutional convention, missionaries in Alabama did not take an active part in political affairs. Though Republican in sympathy, they believed the educational interests of the freedmen could best be served by staying out of politics. For instance, Albert A. Safford complained of a politically minded teacher sent to Talladega. He wrote, "Your letter stating that Mr. Steward of Marion will be with us soon is received . . . I assure you I

¹⁰⁹ A.M.A. School reports for individual Alabama schools on a yearly basis are in AMA MSS.

am *not* pleased at the thought that he may be sent here next year. I wish we could secure another man for this reason. Mr. Steward has a state wide reputation as a politician. That [is why] he was compelled to leave Marion. I have learned that if we would succeed in our work we must for the present, at least, let politics entirely alone.”¹¹⁰

Though many Northern missionaries remained aloof from politics, all participated in church work. The stated aim of the Association was “to commission only teachers possessing the spirit of true religion.” The missionaries believed they were called to work among the freedmen “not only by the claims of country but also by the voice of God . . . [to mold] not only citizens of the Republic but children of our Father in heaven.”¹¹¹ Consequently, missionaries organized churches throughout Alabama. Reverend George W. Andrews assembled a congregation in Montgomery.¹¹² G. S. Pope paid \$1000 for a building in Selma “consecrated to the service of God”¹¹³ In November, 1873, the Sunday School numbered over one hundred, and Pope exclaimed, “I have never labored in any place where there was so much interest manifested by the citizens in our church work.”¹¹⁴ In Marion, T. C. Steward directed Freedmen who cut timber and pounded nails for a new chapel. In August 1870, Negro masons completed the plastering, and church services commenced.¹¹⁵ In all, Northern missionaries founded eight Congregational churches and as many Baptist, Methodist, and Episcopal churches in Alabama in the decade after the Civil War.¹¹⁶

A.M.A. teachers also organized temperance societies. Sarah A. Jenness counted the membership of the “Lincoln Temperance Society of Eufaula” at one hundred in September, 1867. She then asked the New York office of the A.M.A. for eighty more

¹¹⁰Albert A. Safford to Erastus Cravath, Talladega, Alabama, May 4, 1871; Thomas C. Steward to Erastus Cravath, Marion, Alabama, April 5, 1871.

¹¹¹*American Missionary*, X (October, 1866), 225.

¹¹²*Ibid.*, XIX (March, 1875), 55.

¹¹³*Ibid.*, XVII (Nov., 1873), 276.

¹¹⁴*Ibid.*, 277.

¹¹⁵*Ibid.*, XVI (Feb., 1872), 29.

¹¹⁶*Ibid.*, XIX (March, 1875), 55.

certificates of membership.¹¹⁷ Elliot Whipple bragged of one hundred and twelve Freedmen who had signed temperance pledges, "quite a number of whom were in the habit of drinking, many more of whom are seriously thinking about giving up their drams."¹¹⁸ H. Brown called one Sabbath "a day of rejoicing" because a bar-tender, "who only a few weeks since had drank [*sic*] in a few days, thirty dollars worth of whisky," joined the Temperance Society of Talladega.

The interest of A.M.A. teachers in building churches and enlisting temperance pledges was indicative of their deep religious convictions. Almost all were devout Christians.¹¹⁹ Miss Eliza Ayer ended a year of missionary work with the following words: "I have enjoyed the work this year, but cannot bear the thoughts of leaving this inviting field without seeing an outpouring of the Holy Spirit. During the last few days the desire has been increasing until it seems as though the blessing must come. . . . And will you not ask others to pray that our dear pupils and friends may become active useful Christians?"¹²⁰ Elliot Wheeler agreed with the principal aims of the A.M.A. He visualized his job as "work . . . to try to build conscience, to teach [freedmen] their personal responsibility to God." He devoted half an hour every morning "in religious experience" to "cultivate a spirit of devotion."¹²¹ Miss Mary Wells enthusiastically penned, "I have thought of nothing but building Christianity . . . I can think of nothing but the salvation of these precious souls."¹²²

Yet to characterize missionary workers in Alabama as "mere religious fanatics," religious lunatics, people zealous beyond the point of reason, is an oversimplification. The strong

¹¹⁷Sarah A. Jenness to Edward Smith, Eufaula, Alabama, Sept. 20, 1867, AMA MSS.

¹¹⁸Elliot Whipple to Edward Smith, LaFayette, Alabama, June 17, 1867; July 18, 1867; AMA MSS.

¹¹⁹John Silsby to George Whipple, Secretary, A.M.A., Montgomery, Sept. 14, 1866, AMA MSS.

¹²⁰Eliza Ager to Mr. Pike, Montgomery, June 23, 1867, AMA MSS.

¹²¹Elliot Wheeler to Edward Smith, Selma, Alabama, June 4, 1868, AMA MSS.

¹²²*American Missionary*, XVII (March, 1873), 56.

religious motives of missionary teachers in Alabama can be seen in their correspondence, but also in their letters is an equally strong interest in practical and mundane problems. Justus N. Brown, a man of vision and insight, taught at Talladega for two years. His correspondence details his efforts to build schools, place fences, dig wells, cut timber, barter with furniture companies, and teach a class of fifty freedmen. Brown disclosed his attitude toward missionary work when he wrote, "I can get the students to do the work and so help them."¹²³ Neither his actions nor the letters that he sent to the home office indicate he "thought of nothing but the salvation of souls." His attitude was less paternalistic than to "help the Freedman help himself." Henry E. Brown, no relation to his colleague, taught at Talladega for eight years. His correspondence describes building houses for Negroes, organizing the first "teacher" school in Alabama, and scouring the immediate area for possible normal school students. His attitude, like his co-worker, emphasized improvement through self uplift.¹²⁴ "I want them [the freedmen] to get just as much of books as they can," he advised Erastus M. Cravath, "and to get in addition an idea, a willingness, yea a desire to do anything they can by way of self support."¹²⁵

The statements of both Browns indicate more practicality than piety. Yet, the two are not necessarily incompatible, and their religious motivation was probably strong. However, in the nineteenth century, the latter would be expected and does not constitute religious fanaticism. That missionaries were concerned with rectifying unfavorable conditions through self uplift in the Negro community—a definition for social reform much like that espoused by Jane Addams at Hull House in 1910—is more important than their religious "fanaticism."

Along with establishing churches and temperance societies, A.M.A. representatives became active in economic schemes to

¹²³Justus N. Brown to Erastus Cravath, Talladega, Alabama, Sept. 29, 1870, AMA MSS.

¹²⁴A.M.A., *Annual Report*, XXVII, 27-29.

¹²⁵Henry E. Brown to Erastus Cravath, Talladega, Alabama, Jan. 20, 1874, AMA MSS.

aid the Freedmen. In Talladega, H. Brown petitioned R. Rasney, Superintendent of the Selma, Rome and Dalton Railroad, to aid normal school students. Mr. Rasney not only employed Negro teachers as part time clerks to provide them with an income, but cooperated in building a church and a school house, and provided passes for "colored teachers" and "travelling missionaries." Mr. Brown later reminisced, "I wish I had more railroad and business-men here interested in aiding the Freedmen."¹²⁶ Further, Brown erected a number of dwelling in the Negro community. Each summer he obtained lumber from Chattanooga and with laborers from the congregation constructed "one room frame structures." Upon completion he sold them at a low cost to freedmen. One missionary began a clothing store for Negroes in Talladega. Justus Brown wrote to Rev. Cravath of the need for "some means of furnishing steady and lucrative employment to young [black] men."¹²⁷ He argued that a clothing store would require a small amount of capital—the cost of a sewing machine and cloth—and there would be a ready market. "Farmers come here to sell provisions for 20 miles around," Brown explained, "they need clothing as colored people don't sew much, I believe." By April, 1871, the store contained a number of sewing machines and had Negro employees.¹²⁸ In Montgomery, Thomas C. Steward speculated in state bonds to provide funds for the A.M.A. in Alabama. He telegraphed E. M. Cravath on May 24, 1872, "Shall I sell the state bonds(-) . . . telegraph immedy [*sic*]."¹²⁹ Later, referring to the same investment, he wrote, "there is no possible chance to dispose of state money for more than 80¢ and it is the opinion of the best men here that it will not be better until the State Legislature convenes in November. . . . If you can carry them it will be best to wait."¹³⁰ He also purchased three and one half acres in Marion in order "to sell off the land" when the price was right.¹³¹ Whatever the results of these two

¹²⁶Henry Brown to Edward Smith, Talladega, Nov. 1, 1871, AMA MSS.

¹²⁷Justus N. Brown to Erastus Cravath, Talladega, Ala., Oct. 10, 1870, AMA MSS.

¹²⁸*Ibid.*; Albert A. Safford to Erastus Cravath, Talladega, April 8, 1871; Nov. 16, 1871.

¹²⁹Telegram, Thomas C. Steward to Cravath, May 24, 1872, AMA MSS.

¹³⁰Thomas C. Steward to Erastus Cravath, Montgomery, Alabama, May 25, 1872, AMA MSS.

¹³¹*Ibid.*, Dec. 4, 1871.

transactions, their purpose is clear — to aid the freedmen through finance and real estate speculation.

Northern missionaries, along with initiating economic enterprises, also took an active part in Negro journalism. John Silsby, formerly of the Siam Mission, became the first editor of the *Nationalist*, for a time the only Negro newspaper in the state of Alabama. He accepted the editorship in December, 1865, after a group of "colored people" in Mobile had purchased a press and outfitted a printing office.¹³² In a letter, worth quoting in extent, Silsby describes the situation in Alabama and his relationship with the newspaper.

"An effort has been inaugurated at Mobile to establish a newspaper there elevated to the interests of loyalty and freedom. You are no doubt aware that all the newspapers in this state are bitterly opposed to the cause of the freedman and give all their energy to discourage him and his friends, and close the columns against everything in defense of that cause. The colored people believe they must have a paper. . . . They have consequently formed in Mobile a 'newspaper society,' have purchased a press, and the other means of outfit for a printing office, and at their

¹³²John Silsby to George Whipple, Mobile, Ala., Dec. 2, 1865, AMA MSS. The founding of the *Nationalist* was only one example of Negro self help in Alabama. At Mount Moriah, six miles from Montgomery, a colored man by the name of Edward Moore constructed a log schoolhouse at his own expense, on his own property, and taught over fifty pupils in a school entirely supported by freedmen. B. S. Turner, a successful businessman in Selma, contributed generously to schools for his own race. Freedmen built and maintained schools in Eufaula, Montgomery, Talladega, Franklin, Huntsville, Mobile and many other locations. The *Nation* estimated most of the six hundred Negro students in Mobile were self-supporting. The scholars bought their own books, clothes, and paid the salaries of two teachers out of eight. At the same time Wager Swayne mentioned "colored teachers [had] charge as principals of schools at Troy, Wetumpka, Home Colony, and Tuscaloosa."

Alvord, *Report*, Jan. 1, 1868, 32; Charles Wheeler to Edward Smith, Eufaula, Dec. 1, 1868, AMA MSS; John Silsby to George Whipple, Montgomery, Sept. 14, 1866, AMA MSS; The *American Missionary*, XIV (Aug. 1870), 174; The *Nation*, II (Feb. 1866), 209; Senate Executive Documents, 39 Cong., 2 sess., Dec. 6, 12n. Report of Assistant Commissioner of BRFA, Wager Swayne to War Dept., Jan., 31, 1866.

solicitation I have consented to undertake the editorship of their paper.”¹³³

The first running of the press printed the “terms” of the *Nationalist*. The paper advocated “radicalism” that required equal and exact justice to all men irrespective of color, free elections, and a “faith in the capacity of the colored race.”¹³⁴ Silsby undertook the editorship and immediately called upon the A.M.A. for assistance.¹³⁵ Though he was able to remain with the paper for only a few months and large scale aid was not forthcoming, by 1866 the paper had a circulation of 1200, a full time agent in the field, and advertised for Montgomery as well as Mobile and the surrounding area.¹³⁶

The letters of missionaries in Alabama during Reconstruction, hitherto unavailable to historians, indicate that the results of missionary societies’ efforts to educate Negroes were not “wholly bad.” On the contrary, A.M.A. teachers started schools for Negroes in a region where no institutions of learning for freedmen had previously existed. Thousands of blacks learned to read and write and many advanced to “higher branches” only with the assistance of Northern philanthropy. Missionaries instituted normal courses and sent teachers to remote districts, who in turn established schools. The evidence also shows that Northern missionaries were concerned with improving conditions that caused ignorance and poverty. Besides distributing supplies of clothing and food to the destitute, they edited black newspapers, started Negro businesses and initiated building programs for improving housing, schools and churches. Most significantly, many in their ranks, Justus and Henry Brown in particular, generated an enthusiasm for self help and uplift among recently emancipated slaves that transcended the decade of Reconstruction. By 1875, poverty still existed in Alabama and only one in eight Negroes between the ages of six and sixteen attended school, but far from being a “permanent influ-

¹³³ John Silsby to George Whipple, Montgomery, Ala., Nov. 2, 1865, AMA MSS.

¹³⁴ *Nationalist*, Oct. 16, 1865, AMA MSS.

¹³⁵ John Silsby to George Whipple, Montgomery, Nov. 2, 1865, AMA MSS.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, Dec. 2, 1865.

ence for evil" Northern philanthropy laid the foundations for Negro education and self-improvement upon which later generations would have to build.

THE FREEDMEN AND THE LABOR SUPPLY: THE ECONOMIC ADJUSTMENTS IN POST-BELLUM ALABAMA, 1865-1867

by

John B. Myers

One of the most urgent problems which confronted post-Civil War Alabama was labor. Negro slavery had been the foundation of labor in the state and emancipation necessitated the creation of a new labor system. Many white Alabamians, skeptical of free Negro labor, viewed the future pessimistically. Disgruntled whites claimed that the country was ruined and that their prosperity had expired along with institutional slavery. Whites felt blacks would not work without compulsion. Alabama citizens were disgruntled because as one man put it, "A free Nigger ain't going to work from before sunrise until nine o'clock at night and a white man cannot stand it."¹ A Marengo County planter complained, "The trouble with freedmen is that they have not yet learned that living is expensive."² After failing to get any cooperation from his former slaves, a frustrated Alabamian said, "I wish the Yanks had the free Negro strung around their necks and all in the bottom of the Arctic Ocean covered with ice one-hundred feet thick."³ In Union Springs, Alabama, planters tried to control their labor supply by deceiving the blacks. C. W. Buckley, a Freedman's Bureau agent, heard reports of planters warning blacks to return to work because the government had revoked the Emancipation Proclamation.⁴

Some whites took a more realistic view of the labor situation. After losing 190 slaves, one gentleman decided that

¹John T. Trowbridge, *The South: A Tour of Its Battlefields and Ruined Cities* (Hartford, 1967), 423-424; hereafter cited as *The South: A Tour*. Allan Nevins, *Emergence of Modern America, 1865-1877* (New York, 1927), 9; Carl Schurz, "Can the South Solve the Negro Problem?" *McClure's Magazine*, XXII (January, 1904), 260.

²Trowbridge, *The South: A Tour*, 423-424.

³Joshua Burns Moore Diary (typescript), June 3, 1866, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama.

⁴Huntsville *Daily Independent*, January 16, 1866.

since they were free it was best to encourage them to be good citizens. He explained that the two ways to make a man work were encouraging and driving. "The first has been played out so I favor the latter."⁵ An individual from Monroe County was an example of the relatively hopeful class. He admitted that the South had to begin anew and he urged southern men to take courage and restore the South to even greater prosperity. "When it is said that the free nigger would not work," he contended, "the trouble is with them that make the complaint and not the niggers."⁶

Some planters formed agricultural associations to cope with the labor problem. In the summer of 1865 the Agricultural Association of Monroe County announced that it was their duty to "protect and preserve the colored population of the county by furnishing them employment and administering to their wants and needs." Every planter in the county who proposed to employ freedmen was eligible for membership. The aims of the organization were supposed to be beneficial to both employer and employee. Garland Goode, the organization's president, was later appointed superintendent of the Freedmen's Bureau for Monroe County.⁷

Though the Negroes' reluctance to work had been exaggerated, they were hesitant to sign long-term contracts. Rumor indicated that former slaves would receive land from the government. Why would they work for paltry wages when they might have farms of their own? Furthermore, they were fearful of being re-enslaved. In Marengo County a former bondsman when asked by his former master to sign a contract replied, "They say if we make contracts we will be branded and made slaves again."⁸ The Negro expected freedom to bring change. The contract system seemed to be a resumption of old ways. It

⁵New York *Times*, March 26, 1866.

⁶Trowbridge, *The South: A Tour*, 430.

⁷W. Swayne to G. Goode, December 2, 1865, Lewis E. Parsons Personal Papers, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama; *Mobile Weekly Advertiser*, January 20, 1866.

⁸Trowbridge, *The South: A Tour*, 424; Nevins, *Emergence of Modern America*, 9-10.

gave planters their former rights of determining the rules by which their laborers were to work and live. Freedmen were suspicious of a system that permitted their former masters to "exact" their labor.⁹

The task of resolving the labor problems fell upon the Freedmen's Bureau. This was one question on which President Johnson and the Bureau agreed. Johnson realized that the South needed labor and that the freedmen required employment, but he also recognized that "the freedman cannot be fairly accused of unwillingness to work so long as doubt remains about his freedom of employment and wages."¹⁰ By restoring prosperous, compatible relations between capital and labor the Freedmen's Bureau hoped to enhance the blacks' economic conditions and hasten the integration of freedmen into white society. Oliver O. Howard authorized assistant commissioners to introduce practical systems of labor and to resolve the differences arising between Negroes and whites.¹¹

The assistant commissioner of the Bureau in Alabama, Wager Swayne, recognized that he faced a grim task. Swayne prescribed rules and regulations for contracts between employers and employees. He instructed state agents to issue labor regulations in their respective areas. Swayne required contracts for more than thirty days to be written, and agents were authorized to examine and explain the terms of contracts to freedmen. Contracts for less than a month required only a verbal agreement. Parties were permitted to make advantageous contracts but not at the expense of the freedmen's ignorance. Employers had to recognize the former slaves freedom as well as equality before the law. If a freedman had a contract grievance he sought redress from a Justice of the Peace who acted as a Bureau

⁹William S. McFeely, *Yankee Stepfather: General O. O. Howard and the Freedmen* (New Haven, 1968), 152-154.

¹⁰James D. Richardson, *A Compilation of Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789-1902* (New York, 1903), VI, 360.

¹¹Elizabeth Bethel, "Freedmen's Bureau in Alabama," *Journal of Southern History*, XIV (February, 1948), 49-50; U. S. Congress, *Senate Executive Documents*, 39th Congress, 2nd Session, No. 6, 4.

agent and who was required to admit Negro testimony.¹²

The Bureau often protected freedmen from exploitation by planters but sometimes it seemed to be a greater friend to planters than to Negroes. Freedmen were compelled to work. Negroes who loitered in the towns and countryside without means of support were prosecuted for vagrancy. General Charles R. Woods, commander of the Department of Alabama, prohibited loitering and indolent freedmen from remaining in the garrisons unless they were legitimately employed. A planter could charge an employee with vagrancy if he was absent from labor, without good reason, for more than one day or longer than three days in a month. By use of such coercive measures, the Bureau hoped to compel freedmen to agree to contracts and settle down to work.¹³

Though the Bureau forced able-bodied freedmen to work, they took precautions to prevent old and infirm Negroes from being prosecuted for vagrancy. Regulations required former masters to care for such freedmen until the civil authorities made provisions for them. Negroes who would not work for wages or abide by contracts were confined to home colonies. The Bureau urged other freedmen who were unable to find work to come to the colonies to obtain food, shelter, and medical attention. The Bureau rehabilitated some of these freedmen and transported them to areas where they could secure employment.¹⁴

The Freedmen's Bureau did not require a fixed amount of wages to be prescribed in the contracts, but written agreements had to guarantee the necessities of life to employees. Employers were usually obligated to furnish food, shelter, clothing, and

¹²Huntsville *Daily Independent*, January 31, 1866; Grove Hill *Clarke County Journal*, September 14, 1865; W. Swayne to L. E. Parsons, October 31, 1866, Lewis E. Parsons Personal Papers.

¹³Selma *Daily Times*, August 30, 1865; George R. Bentley, *History of Freedmen's Bureau* (Philadelphia, 1955), 84-85; Bethel, "Freedmen's Bureau in Alabama," *Journal of Southern History*, XIV (February, 1948), 54.

¹⁴E. Merton Coulter, *The South During Reconstruction, 1865-1877* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana, 1947), 72; Grove Hill *Clarke County Journal*, January 22, 1865; Chicago *Tribune*, August 28, 1865.

medical attention for employees and their families. The ordinary rate of compensation for field work was ten or twelve dollars a month for men and six to ten dollars a month for women. For domestic work the salary was generally higher.¹⁵ For a yearly wage contract the employer usually paid half wages on either August 1st or October 1st and the rest on January 1st. A violation of a contract by an employee resulted in the forfeiture of all wages. Furthermore, employers deducted from freedmen's wages for time lost due to illness, refusal to work, careless breakage of tools, willful destruction of property and abuse of stock. Due to the employer's discretionary deductions, many freedmen received no wages at the end of the year but instead were indebted to the planter. Such situations frequently bound Negro laborers to the planters.¹⁶

In Alabama the problem of free labor was increased by the state's general poverty. The lack of available capital necessitated the use of the share-crop system. Crop sharing was adopted in Alabama as early as 1865 and was welcomed by former slaves.¹⁷ Freedmen received shelter, food, and clothing, and agreed to work for a share of the gathered crop, usually one third. In some cases freedmen provided their own food and divided the crop equally. On several plantations the planters arranged a certificate system for employees. Freedmen purchased goods on credit in anticipation of paying their certificate debts when the crop was harvested. At the end of the year employees frequently were unable to cancel their certificate purchases, particularly when the crops failed. This was the beginning of a system of virtual peonage which kept the freedmen in debt and tied them to the land.¹⁸

Industrious white planters welcomed Swayne's labor pro-

¹⁵W. Swayne to L. E. Parsons, October 31, 1866, Lewis E. Parsons Personal Papers.

¹⁶Grove Hill *Clarke County Journal*, September 14, 1865; R. Stratford to R. Talifero, November 1, 1866, Robert M. Patton Papers, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama.

¹⁷U. B. Phillips, "Plantations with Slave Labor and Free," *American Historical Review*, XXX (July, 1925), 749.

¹⁸General Josiah Gorgas Diary (typescript), December, n.d., 1866, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama; John Richard Dennett, *The South As It Is*, edited by Henry M. Christman (New York, 1965), 291-93.

grams. They anticipated a flooded labor market since Swayne appeared willing to coerce all idle freedmen to work. The assistant commissioner urged freedmen to forget about rumors of parcelled-out land. He warned them to "hope for nothing, but go work and behave yourselves."¹⁹

After January 1, 1866, when it became obvious that they would not be given land, more Alabama freedmen began to agree to contract terms and by February, most had gone back to work. The Freedmen's Bureau played a vital role by relocating freedmen in areas where labor was needed.²⁰ Some planters acquired laborers in devious manners. One planter turned 400 hogs into his fields. Freedmen that came by saw the hogs, stopped, and in a week he had all the necessary laborers. Other employers filled their quotas by paying the fines of freedmen on the chain gang or by bailing them out of jails.²¹

According to reports from various sections of Alabama there were few idle freedmen remaining in the towns in 1866. When employers offered fair wages they had little trouble getting workers. A Montgomery newspaper reported that the freedmen made contracts and left town. The *Wilcox Times* noticed that there were not one-fifth as many freedmen in Camden, the county seat, since they made contracts.²²

Evidence indicated that freedmen's general response to work in 1866 was commendable. A northern newspaper correspondent, traveling through Alabama in 1866, found most blacks at work and said, "whites seemed reconciled that blacks would work as free labor."²³ C. W. Buckley noticed a growing confidence among Lowndes County planters in their ability to make a crop with free Negro labor. Men who told him a year ago that freed-

¹⁹Jacksonville *Times Union*, October 15, 1865; Grove Hill *Clarke County Journal*, September 14, 1865; Bentley, *History of the Freedmen's Bureau*, 111-112.

²⁰U. S. Congress, *House Executive Documents*, 39th Congress, 2nd Session, No. 1, 709; Bentley, *History of the Freedmen's Bureau*, 85.

²¹Trowbridge, *The South: A Tour*, 448.

²²Moulton *Christian Herald*, March 9, 1866; Grove Hill *Clarke County Journal*, January 17, 1866; Montgomery *Daily Advertiser*, June 16, 1866.

men would not work without compulsion "told me this week that the Negroes have never worked better."²⁴

News of freedmen at work and optimistic predictions of good crops circulated throughout Alabama in 1866. When asked the prospect of the coming crop, an old woman replied, "If the niggers keep on as they have done begun, there will be a large quantity of corn and cotton raised."²⁵ Freedmen were reportedly hard at work in Tuscaloosa, Mobile, and Perry Counties. Mobile freedmen found work in the city as well as on the plantations. In Tuskegee and Union Springs the freedmen discharged their duties faithfully on profitably managed farms. In Randolph County whites accused blacks of not working, but evidence indicated these charges were false. Throughout Alabama in 1866, the freedmen displayed a commendable spirit and behaved themselves as well as whites.²⁶ Even the Alabama legislators concurred that the freedmen had made contracts and were hard at work. They urged Negroes to continue as laborers and to put "politics and the thought of social equality" out of their minds.²⁷

Unfortunately not all white Alabamians accepted the freedmen's agreement to contract and willingness to work as a gesture of good faith. In Montgomery a planter charged that freedmen made contracts and work out of habit and "have little notion of the obligation the agreement imposed upon them."²⁸ Some planters ignored the contract terms at the expense of

²³Chicago *Tribune*, May 25, 1866; New York *Times*, March 26, 1866.

²⁴U. S. Congress, *House Executive Documents*, 39th Congress, 1st Session, No. 72, 292.

²⁵New York *Times*, March 26, 1866.

²⁶Marion *Commonwealth*, July 19, 1866; Stanley Hoole, ed., "The Diary of Basil Manly, 1857-1867," *Alabama Review*, V (April, 1952), 142; Whitelaw Reid, *After the War: A Tour of Southern States, 1865-1866* (London, 1866), 222; hereafter cited as *After the War: A Tour*. Chicago *Tribune*, May 13, 1866; Union Springs *Times*, March 21, 1866; Montgomery *Daily Post*, July 3, 1866; U. S. Congress, *House Reports*, 39th Congress, 1st Session, No. 30, 10.

²⁷Alabama, *Journal of the House of Representatives, 1865*, 24-25; Walter L. Fleming, *Sequel of Appomattox* (New Haven, 1921), 110.

²⁸J. Sanford to Parents, February 25, 1866, John W. A. Sanford, Jr. Papers, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama.

Negro employees. At the end of 1866 reports from the Bureau sub-districts disclosed cases of employers refusing to pay wages. The failure of the crops had much to do with it but there was a general inclination to regard the blacks as fair targets for fraud. Some planters adopted "frivolous pretexts" and offensive methods to drive laborers off the plantation which resulted in the forfeiture of their wages. Swayne informed O. O. Howard that freedmen were being driven away when the crop was made. A newspaper correspondent attending court proceedings in Huntsville heard freedmen charge employers with failure to pay wages for rendered services.²⁹

In February, 1866, Governor Patton recognized that freedmen suffered abuse under the share-crop plan. "Their masters," he said, "withhold under one flimsy pretext or another their freedmen's proper claims to the crops." Tuscaloosa County planters formed combinations and refused to give the freedmen more than one-eighth of the crop. The credit system and devious designs of planters prevented many freedmen from receiving their share of the harvest.³⁰

To some whites the thought of free Negro labor was repulsive. They stubbornly refused to hire freedmen and sought to supplant free Negro with white immigrant labor. A self-proclaimed authority in Mobile assured planters that once white labor was brought into the country production would increase.³¹ Companies were formed in Alabama to import Chinese "coolies" and European immigrants as a labor supply. Dillard, McMinn and Company, a white labor agency in Montgomery, offered to furnish white immigrant labor of any quantity and of any

²⁹U. S. Congress, *House Executive Documents*, 40th Congress, 2nd Session, No. 1, 679; W. Swayne to L. E. Parsons, September 30, 1867, Lewis E. Parsons Personal Papers; W. Swayne to O. O. Howard, August 23, 1866, Oliver Otis Howard Papers, Hawthorne-Longfellow Library, Bowdoin College, Brunswick, Maine; *Chicago Tribune*, August 28, 1866.

³⁰DuBose, *Alabama's Tragic Decade: Ten Years of Alabama, 1865-1875*, edited by James K. Greer (Birmingham, 1940), 69; U. S. Congress, *House Reports*, 39th Congress, 1st Session, No. 30, 8-9.

³¹J. C. Nott, "Climates of the South in Their Relations to White Labor," *DeBow's Review* (New Series), I (February, 1866), 167. Nott was a physician and author of several articles on slavery and the Negro.

nativity. Their rates upon delivery were as follows: men, \$150.00 per year; women, \$100.00 per year; children, \$50.00 per year; and house servants, \$15.00 per month.³²

Alabama planters thought either German or Chinese labor would be the best replacements. They considered the Chinese "solemn, industrious, intelligent, and docile." "What is even better," exhorted a Mobile resident, "they are utterly destitute of political ambition and their interest in government is limited to a desire to lead a quiet life and be left alone."³³ The Freedmen's Bureau reported that cooperative groups of planters tried to underbid the Negro by hiring German immigrants at wages so low that freedmen could not survive. There were few examples of planters successfully utilizing white labor. In Choctaw County, Robert Littlepage hired twenty to thirty immigrants to work on his plantation. After a month's trial he claimed to be satisfied. Other planters did not care for what they considered the arrogant attitude of some white laborers.³⁴

The Alabama experiment with white immigrant labor had only limited success for several reasons. Most of the European immigrants arrived in northeastern ports and remained with their relatives living in the North and Midwest. Chinese labor was less abundant and the cost of transportation was high. Alabamians had a mistaken impression of what a European or Asian immigrant sought. They wanted him to take the place of the Negro, living in the same cabins, working the same hours, and eating the same food. These conditions, which the immigrants had no desire to endure, along with the hot southern climate repelled many potential white laborers. After the failure with immigrant labor white Alabamians were forced to accept the Negroes as the mainstay of labor unless they contemplated working the land themselves.³⁵

³²*Congressional Globe*, 39th Congress, 1st Session, Part I, 94; *Selma Morning Times*, December 11, 1865.

³³*Mobile Weekly Advertiser*, October 27, 1866; *Mobile Evening Tribune*, December 7, 1866.

³⁴*Mobile Daily Advertiser and Register*, December 3, 1866; *Butler Choctaw Herald*, February 9, 1867.

³⁵Coulter, *South During Reconstruction, 1865-1877*, Dr. Wren to O. O. Howard, December 11, 1865, Oliver Otis Howard Papers; Reid, *After the War: A Tour*, 372, 373.

The Alabama crops of 1865 and 1866 were not successful and created hardships for both whites and blacks. Due to unsettled conditions and the late release of Alabamians from the Confederate Army, the planted crop of 1865 was small. Most of what was planted was virtually ruined by a drought. In 1866 adverse weather and ravages of the cotton worm destroyed much of the cotton and corn.³⁶ To make matters worse, the market price for agricultural produce fell to half the anticipated level. As a result of the poor harvest and low prices, Negroes and whites had little money to obtain food and clothing. These economic hardships caused some white Alabamians to question the practicality of the free labor system.³⁷

By 1867 the economic situation of the freedmen had been altered considerably. They had demonstrated their reliability as free laborers. Unfortunately their display of good faith was marred by poor crops in 1865 and 1866, by white and black lack of experience with the wage system, and by the prevalence of Alabama's destitution.

The freedmen were still not completely self-sufficient or integrated into the economic and social structure of white Alabama. But the former slaves continued to pursue the standards which they identified with freedom. Freedmen needed guidance and assistance to continue their transition from slavery to freedom.

³⁶Bethel, "Freedmen's Bureau in Alabama," *Journal of Southern History*, XIV (February, 1948), 59; Moore, *History of Alabama*, 458; Oliver Otis Howard, *Autobiography of O. O. Howard*, (New York, 1907), II, 249.

³⁷U. S. Congress, *House Executive Documents*, 39th Congress, 2nd Session, No. 1, 742; *Tuscaloosa Observer*, June 9, 1866.

POPULISM IN ALABAMA: REUBEN F. KOLB AND THE APPEALS TO MINORITY GROUPS

by

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One of the most controversial aspects of Populist historiography is the question of Populist appeals to and attitudes toward minority groups, especially Jews and Negroes. During the 1950's historians began to challenge the older sympathetic view of Populism and to re-interpret the movement. The Populist was no longer a poor down-trodden, much-maligned farmer, but was now an irresponsible anti-Semitic agrarian with delusions of persecution and secret conspiracies.¹ The charge of anti-Semitism can best be found in the works of Oscar Handlin and Richard Hofstadter. These historians suggested that Populist imagery of the Jew provided the base for later American anti-Semitism.² Norman Pollack and Walter T. K. Nugent studied Mid- Western Populism and refuted these charges.³ John Higham believes the charges have been overstated⁴ and C. Vann Woodward, while not excusing or dismissing Populist anti-Semitism, feels that this was more a characteristic of the urban poor, and that the positive aspects of the Populist heritage should be emphasized..⁵

The position of the Negro in the Populist Revolt has not been analyzed as extensively as the position of the Jew. Wood-

¹Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform: From Bryan to F. D. R.* (New York: Vintage Books, Random House, 1955), 77-78. Hereafter cited as Hofstadter, *Age of Reform*.

²*Ibid.*, 80. See also Oscar Handlin, "American Views of the Jew at the Opening of the Twentieth Century," Publications of the *American Jewish Historical Society*, XL (1951), cited in Oscar Handlin, "Reconsidering the Populists," *Agricultural History*, XXXIX (April, 1965), 69.

³Norman Pollack, "The Myth of Populist Anti-Semitism," *American Historical Review*, LXVIII (October, 1962), 76-80; Walter T. K. Nugent, *The Tolerant Populists* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), 231, 234-235.

⁴John Higham, "Anti-Semitism in the Gilded Age," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, XLIII (March, 1957), 559-578.

⁵C. Vann Woodward, "The Populist Heritage and the Intellectual," *The American Scholar*, XXIX (1960), 55-72.

ward feels that during the Populist period Negroes and whites came closer to achieving a "comity of mind and harmony of political purpose than ever before or since in the South,"⁶ and Hofstadter commends Southern Populist leaders for attempting "to build a popular movement that would cut across the old barriers of race."⁷ Pollack believes that there "is still not sufficient evidence to indicate whether Populists enlisted the support of Negroes in order to use them to get elected or whether such support was founded on a genuine desire to extend a hand of friendship and justice for its own sake."⁸ The collapse of Populism was tragic according to Jack Abramowitz, for it ended all opportunity of "producing a truly emancipated South" with the end of "hostility and suspicion between Negroes and whites."⁹ The most recent treatment concluded that the Populist period "marked a potentially significant development in Southern history" and Negro-white relations.¹⁰

The analysis of Populist anti-Semitism has been primarily from a Mid-western point-of-view, and those who have analyzed the Negroes' part in the Populist period have not adequately considered Populism in Alabama. To what extent then does the Populist activity in Alabama affirm or contradict the various interpretations? What were the appeals of Alabama Populists to minority groups? And do the Alabama Populists deserve any credit for racial liberalism?

Alabama politics of the 1890's is a "tangled skein . . . almost beyond belief."¹¹ The Populist movement in Alabama involved four distinct groups. The Jeffersonian-Democrats were the result of a factional dispute within the Democratic party.

⁶C. Vann Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), 64.

⁷Hofstadter, *Age of Reform*, 61.

⁸Norman Pollack, ed., *The Populist Mind* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, Company, 1967), 359.

⁹Jack Abramowitz, "The Negro in the Populist Movement," *The Journal of Negro History*, XXXVIII (July, 1953), 288.

¹⁰Robert Saunders, "Southern Populists and the Negro," *The Journal of Negro History*, LIV (July, 1969), 257.

¹¹Hugh C. Bailey, *Liberalism in the New South: Southern Social Reformers and the Progressive Movement* (Coral Gables: University of Miami Press, 1969), 57.

The true third party Populists were small in number and influence but kept a separate organization while closely cooperating with the Jeffersonian-Democrats. The Black and Tans, the Negro wing, and the Lilly-Whites, the white wing, of the Republican party, were involved in their own party battle; but generally these factions failed to put out a state ticket and supported the Jeffersonian-Democratic-Populist candidates. These four groups represented the reform element in Alabama and provided the political opposition to the regular entrenched Bourbon Democrats from 1890 to 1896.

The foremost leader of the reformers in Alabama was Reuben Francis Kolb, who had all the credentials for a successful political career in Alabama. He was born into a politically prominent Barbour County family. He had an excellent Civil War record.¹² Reconstruction offered Kolb another political laurel as he appeared in the role of active "redeemer."¹³ In re-building his plantation near Eufaula, Kolb first planted cotton, but the fall of cotton prices forced him to diversify his crops. He experimented with pecans, peaches, pears, and cucumbers and developed the "Kolb Gem" watermelon which became famous throughout the South.¹⁴ Kolb was a member of the Grange, was elected president of the national Farmers' Congress in 1887, and was appointed Alabama Commissioner of Agriculture where his political future began to develop.¹⁵

From the start of his appointment in 1887, Kolb seemed to be running for governor. He initiated a program of farmer's institutes and he personally traveled all over the state speaking to farm groups about good agricultural practices. He won many friends and probably knew more people by name

¹²Charles Grayson Summersell, "Kolb and the Populist Revolt as Viewed by Newspapers," *Alabama Historical Quarterly*, XIX (Fall & Winter, 1957), 377.

¹³Ruth Stodghill Cammack, "Reuben Francis Kolb: His Influence on Agriculture in Alabama," (unpublished Master's thesis, Auburn University, 1941), 4. Hereafter cited as Cammack, "Kolb."

¹⁴Reuben F. Kolb to John W. Dubose, July 7, 1888, John W. DuBose Papers, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama. Hereafter cited as ADAH.

¹⁵William Warren Rogers, "Reuben F. Kolb: Agricultural Leader of the New South," *Agricultural History*, XXXII (April, 1958), 112, 115.

than any other man in Alabama. In August, 1889, the Alabama Farmer's Alliance convention endorsed Kolb for governor,¹⁶ thus making a "definite plunge . . . into politics,"¹⁷ which caused the Alliance to lose considerable support.¹⁸ Kolb attended the national Alliance convention in St. Louis in December and announced his official candidacy for governor on his return to Alabama. In answer to questions about the political resolutions of the convention, Kolb insisted that he was a Democrat and denied that there was a third party move in the St. Louis platform.¹⁹

Kolb first attempted to gain the Democratic nomination for governor, which in Alabama was tantamount to election. He was the strongest of four candidates, and at the Democratic State Convention he held the lead for thirty-three ballots.²⁰ The established politicians feared Kolb because he represented the farmer-dissident groups. After an all-night meeting the other candidates compromised on Thomas Goode Jones in order to prevent Kolb from getting the nomination.²¹ Kolb graciously withdrew his name, pledged his loyalty to the Democracy and white supremacy, and promised to campaign for Jones.²² The Greenback Labor party offered Kolb their nomination for gov-

¹⁶Albert Burton Moore, *History of Alabama* (Tuscaloosa: Alabama Book Store, 1951), 605.

¹⁷John B. Clark, *Populism in Alabama* (Auburn: Auburn Printing Company, 1927), 84. Hereafter cited as Clark, *Populism*.

¹⁸John Tyler Morgan, "The Dangers of the Farmers' Alliance," *Forum*, XII (November, 1891), 388-409.

¹⁹Clark, *Populism*, 90.

²⁰Malcolm Cook McMillan, *Constitutional Development in Alabama, 1798-1901: A Study in Politics, the Negro and Sectionalism*, Vol. XXXVII of *The James Sprunt Studies in History and Political Science*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1955), 228. Hereafter cited as McMillan, *Constitutional Development*.

²¹Sheldon Hackney, *Populism to Progressivism in Alabama* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1969), 16. Hereafter cited as Hackney, *Populism*.

²²Kolb Scrapbook, undated clippings from the *Tuscaloosa Times*, *Atlanta Journal*, *Birmingham Age-Herald*, *Selma Alabama Mirror*, *Piedmont Post*, and others. See also Thomas Goode Jones, "The 1890-92 Campaigns for Governor of Alabama," *Alabama Historical Quarterly*, XX (Winter, 1958), 663. Hereafter cited as Jones, "Campaign."

ernor, but he "wired a peremptory refusal."²³

For the next two years the alliance wing of the Democratic party refused to acknowledge any connection with the People's party, and Kolb continued to express his devotion to the Democracy.²⁴ But the gross irregularities in the convention-delegate elections embittered Kolb and he severely denounced Jones. Again in 1892 Kolb tried to capture the Democratic nomination, and again he lost in delegate elections tainted with fraud.²⁵ The State Democratic executive committee ruled in favor of more Jones than Kolb delegates in disputed elections. Kolb realized that he could not be nominated by the convention and he proposed that the nomination be made a statewide white Democratic primary. The Jones faction refused the offer. It was obvious that the Democrats depended on the controlled Negro vote and were unwilling to meet the Populists on their terms²⁶

Possibly with time and patience Kolb could have been elected governor on the regular Democratic ticket. No doubt his association with national farm reform groups and the organization nationally of the People's party influenced Kolb's course in Alabama politics. With his second failure Kolb resorted to the apparatus of a third party, which many people had long predicted he would do.²⁷ Because of the strong loyalty in Alabama to the Democratic party, Kolb knew that many of his supporters would be reluctant to follow him into third party opposition. Therefore, Kolb claimed that he represented the "true democracy," the real Jeffersonian-Democratic party.²⁸

²³Kolb Scrapbook, undated clipping, *Montgomery Advertiser*.

²⁴Abbeville *Times*, April 10, 1891; June 12, 1891: Clark, *Populism*, 116.

²⁵Charles Grayson Summersell, "The Alabama Governor's Race in 1892," *Alabama Review*, VIII (January, 1955), 16-17.

²⁶Allen Woodrow Jones, "A History of the Direct Primary in Alabama, 1840-1903," (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Alabama, 1964), 211. Hereafter cited as Jones, "Direct Primary,"; Hackney, *Populism*, 46-47.

²⁷William Warren Rogers, "Agrarianism in Alabama, 1865-1896," (unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, University of North Carolina, 1959), 359. Hereafter cited as Rogers, "Agrarianism."

²⁸*Ibid.*, 362.

Kolb was defeated by Jones in the general election of 1892, and two years later he again lost to the regular Democratic nominee, William C. Oates. In both elections fraud, ballot box stuffing, vote buying and tally manipulations were openly evident, especially in the Black Belt counties.²⁹ During Reconstruction the Democrats had "counted-out" and controlled the Negro vote in order to redeem the state from Radical rule. In the 1890's they "counted-in" and controlled the Negro vote to build up large majorities for the Democratic candidates. The third party reform group did not control the election process, and there was no law to provide for contesting elections.³⁰ Exposing these frauds comprised the major issue in all of Kolb's campaigns.

The Democratic attack on Kolb's third party activity took several forms. The politicians assailed his personal character, accused him of various fraudulent activities, and even insulted his wife.³¹ The possibility that division of the white vote would elect Republicans or would allow Negroes to control the state government was proclaimed from the stump and the editorial page. The Democrats resurrected the days of Reconstruction and used the spectre of Negro domination to frighten reluctant whites into staying in the Democratic ranks.³² The concentration on this issue precluded any necessity for debating controversial issues of reform.³³

A much more serious development, from the Democratic view, was the open appeal which the Kolb faction made for Negro votes. Kolb's personal racial beliefs were not unorthodox for a

²⁹Robert McKee to Willis Brewer, August 7, 1892, Robert McKee Papers, ADAH; Chappel Cory to Thomas Goode Jones, August 14, 1892, Thomas Goode Jones Papers, ADAH; Hackney, *Populism*, 36. For an interesting fictional account see John H. Wallace, Jr., *The Senator From Alabama* (New York: Neale Publishing Co., 1904). See especially Chapter XIII, "The Carnival of the Ballot-Box Stuffers."

³⁰McMillan, *Constitutional Development*, 229.

³¹Montgomery *Advertiser*, January 6, March 19, 1892.

³²Butler *Choctaw Advocate*, July 13, 1892. See also Joseph C. Manning *Politics in Alabama* (privately published, 1893), 20.

³³Allen Johnston Going, *Bourbon Democracy in Alabama 1874-1890* (University, Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1951), 211.

white southerner of the nineteenth century. He believed in "white supremacy."³⁴ He was eager for Negroes to vote for him, but he was reluctant to admit them to the party organizational level.³⁵ For instance, at the St. Louis Convention in February, 1892, the Alabama delegation had been the lone and very vocal opposition to the election of a colored delegate to the position of Assistant Secretary.³⁶ A recent writer has suggested that opposition to Kolb was motivated more because he activated "men with political and economic grievances" than because he represented a variance from racial orthodoxy.³⁷

The plank of the Jeffersonian-Democratic party platform which was designed to appeal to the Negro said:

We favor the protection of the colored race in their political rights, and should afford them encouragement and aid in the attainment of a higher civilization and citizenship, so that through the means of kindness a better understanding and more satisfactory condition may exist between the races.³⁸

A Democratic paper, the *Choctaw Advocate*, warned that after Negro voting came Negro office holders.³⁹ Kolb men were accused of promising Negroes that they would be placed on juries and appointed election officials.⁴⁰ The *Advocate* believed that since the Negro already had all the educational and religious advantages, "with all the privileges" "protected and maintained by law" which the white had, then the Populist must mean social equality by the platform.⁴¹ The paper pointed out that Kolb once bragged about "supressing Negro votes" during Reconstruction and now that the "white voters have repudiated

³⁴Cammack, "Kolb," 23.

³⁵Kolb Scrapbook; Clark, *Populism*, 152.

³⁶Montgomery *Advertiser*, February 24, 1892.

³⁷Hackney, *Populism*, 42-43.

³⁸Butler *Choctaw Advocate*, July 13, 1892.

³⁹Butler *Choctaw Advocate*, July 20, 1892.

⁴⁰Abbeville *Times*, July 27, 1894.

⁴¹Butler *Choctaw Advocate*, July 13, 1892.

him," he "turns with open arms to the race he "spurned."⁴²

In his speeches, Kolb stressed the common problems of the farmer, whether he was black or white. Local Negroes frequently spoke at Kolb rallies. The *Birmingham News* decried the fact that Kolbites at Talladega sat and listened to a Negro speak for over an hour on the duty and principles of government, and the editor asked, "Men of Alabama, whither are we drifting!"⁴³ At Greenville, Kolb used a "brass band . . . to drum up a crowd of colored voters." He was followed on the platform by a local colored man, Ike Carter. Several hours later the Democratic candidate, Jones, spoke at the Greenville courthouse. His address was also followed by speeches from local Negro leaders urging support for the Democratic ticket. So both Populists and Democrats used Negro speakers.⁴⁴

The *Montgomery Advertiser*, Kolb's bitterest critic, claimed that the "Kolbites" worked hard for the Negro votes, and that they had two Negroes, Professor Cooper and Lewis Bostick in the field to buy votes. Cooper and Bostick had "what it takes to make the mare go" and they flashed it (presumably money) openly.⁴⁵ According to the Democratic press these unlimited funds came from New York-Republican-protectionist groups who were interested in getting presidential votes for Benjamin Harrison in November.⁴⁶ The *Advertiser* referred to Kolb's "black flag of revolt," and predicted that he and his "negro vote begging" would be defeated "by the invincible white supremacy Democrats."⁴⁷

Kolb's addresses are rather mild compared to the speeches of some of his followers. The most violent of the Populist speakers was Peyton G. Bowman, a Birmingham lawyer. At a Kolb rally in Opelika in July, 1892, Bowman spoke to a group

⁴²*Ibid.*, July 20, 1892.

⁴³*Butler Choctaw Advocate*, July 27, 1892, quoting *Birmingham News*.

⁴⁴*Greenville Advocate*, July 27, 1892.

⁴⁵*Montgomery Advertiser*, June 29, 1892.

⁴⁶*Butler Choctaw Advocate*, July 13, 1892; See also *Abbeville Times*, January 19, 1894, quoting *Jacksonville Republican*.

⁴⁷*Montgomery Advertiser*, June 11, 1892.

of about 8,000, including 2,000, Negro farmers.⁴⁸ In part he said:

I am in favor of killing them if they don't count it right. They have said that we can't win this fight if we don't go over their dead bodies. I for one am willing to have them go over my dead body to secure you in the right of voting for whom you please and of casting your ballots unmolested. I had rather see Mobile Bay filled with Pinkerton's detectives, the banks of every river and creek in Alabama lined with Federal bayonets and crimson with blood, rather than see you deprived of the privilege of voting for whom you please. The time has come when the working man must throw down the plow and do his duty. They say they will cheat us in the Black Belt. We must come up one man in the white belt Let the colored man stand up for his race and vote for a free ballot and civil liberty. The inspector who attempts to swindle or make miscount in the coming election will have the biggest job he ever undertook Go to the polls and vote for your civil rights and liberty. If you don't they will soon have all the rights and nothing will be left you.⁴⁹

The *Greenville Advocate* expressed horror at this "incendiary speech, commenting that Kolb, sitting on the platform behind Bowman, smiled when the Negroes cheered the speech."⁵⁰

The Kolb-Jeffersonians warned Negroes and poor whites that the Jones Democrats proposed to take away their rights to vote, and drew attention to the Thirteenth plank in the Democratic platform which called for the "passage of such election laws as will better secure the government of the state in the hands of the intelligent and the virtuous" and for "a secret ballot."⁵¹ The Jeffersonians said the Democrats planned to bring the "Mississippi Plan" to Alabama, and pointed to the bill pro-

⁴⁸Birmingham *News*, July 17, 1892.

⁴⁹Greenville *Advocate*, July 20, 1892.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*

⁵¹Birmingham *News*, July 3, 1892; Ozark *Banner*, February 16, 1893; Jones, "Campaigns," 673.

posed in the legislature by Speaker of the House Frank L. Pettus. The Kolb faction opposed the Sayre election law which was passed by the Democratic state legislature in 1892 to fulfill the "Thirteenth plank."⁵² This law required a slight educational qualification for voting.

Kolb lost some white support and several prominent backers left the Kolb faction because of the party appeals to the Negro.⁵³ Democratic party regulars charged that the Kolb people "played on the passions and prejudices of the inferior race," and that they not only sought the Negro vote but the Republican vote as well.⁵⁴ The regulars insisted that the future of the white race depended upon a Democratic victory. Governor Jones' most popular speech, judged on the basis of its frequent and prolonged appearance in the Democratic press, was one he gave at Clayton. He warned that the "walls of our civilization, which can be guarded only by an united white race" depend on the unity of the Democratic party of Alabama. "Shatter it . . . and all the woes of our past will be bright compared to the future which awaits us."⁵⁵

To counteract the Populist overtures to the Negro, the Democrats made their own appeal to the Black vote.⁵⁶ The Democratic press called for the support of all "industrious, useful, lawful negroes" who were too "intelligent and too well informed to be hood-winked and made stepping stones" by Reuben Kolb and his "incendiary lieutenants." Alabama Negroes were reminded of the many benefits of a "peaceful, conservative Democratic State Government." It was the "duty of every good Democrat" to tell the Negro "that the overthrow of conservative Democratic Government in the State means a recurrence of the rule of bad, violent, white men who will use them, then neglect them."⁵⁷ The newspapers hinted that the "third

⁵²Ozark *Banner*, March 9, April 6, 1893.

⁵³Rogers, "Agrarianism," 368.

⁵⁴Dothan *Wire-Grass Siftings*, April 21, 1892.

⁵⁵Dothan *Wire-Grass Siftings*, April 11, 28, 1892; *Montgomery Advertiser*, April 21, 22, 1892.

⁵⁶Hackney, *Populism*, 35; Jones, "Campaigns," 673.

⁵⁷Birmingham *News*, July 14, 1892.

partyites" were involved in "white capper" activity in the wiregrass area, and it was hoped that this would "open the eyes of the colored folks."⁵⁸ Under the Sayre law the machine politicians in the Black Belt registered Negroes who had "acted in political concert" with them; and in Lowndes County, where there were 1,000 white and 4,000 colored registered in 1896, the preponderance of Black votes presented no danger to white supremacy because they were rigidly controlled by the Democratic faction.⁵⁹ In Marengo County, when the Democrats added Negroes to jury duty, the Populist press noted that it was a "bid for the Negro vote in the next election"⁶⁰

Kolb was very interested in gaining the Jefferson County labor vote, and he frequently visited the Pratt City mining area.⁶¹ He felt that a laborer was "entitled to the living he can make unlimited by hostile legislation."⁶² The Alabama Labor Conference meeting in Birmingham in 1892 adopted the St. Louis platform, and Kolb supporters were active during the meeting.⁶³ The miners supported Kolb because of his "promises in regard to the convicts" who were worked in the Jefferson County mines.⁶⁴ The support for Kolb increased among the miners after the panic of 1893, and during the "great strike" of 1894, there is "little doubt that the miners supported Kolb over Oates."⁶⁵ Governor Jones sent troops to the mining areas to reduce the violence, and one of his representatives wrote: "The striking miners are the strongest backing Kolb has."⁶⁶ The Jeffersonian-Democratic platform in 1894 called for the elimination of convict and child labor from the mines and lien laws for

⁵⁸Abbeville *Times*, July 27, 1894. "White capper activity" was a type of white vigilante movement in the wiregrass, the area of southeast Alabama.

⁵⁹Birmingham *People's Weekly Tribune*, June 4, 1896.

⁶⁰Butler *Choctaw Alliance*, July 5, 1892.

⁶¹Kolb Scrapbook, undated clipping, Birmingham *Age-Herald*.

⁶²Birmingham *People's Daily Tribune*, November 8, 1894.

⁶³Ozark *Banner*, June 2, 9, 1892.

⁶⁴Robert David Ward and William Warren Rogers, *Labor Revolt in Alabama: The Great Strike of 1894* (University, Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1965), 42. Hereafter cited as Ward and Rogers, *Labor Revolt*.

⁶⁵*Ibid.*, 117.

⁶⁶Quoted in C. Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South 1877-1913* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1951), 267.

miners, for the election by the miners of their own inspector of mines, and for a state inspector of mines and for a state inspector for weights and measures.⁶⁷ Henry F. DeBardeleben prominent Birmingham industrialist, offered to give miners free transportation to Northern mines. This was interpreted as a move to reduce Kolb's support before the election.⁶⁸

There were few references in the Populist press of Alabama to the Jew. The *Ozark Banner*, a Populist paper, played up the attempted assassination of H. C. Frick of the Carnegie Company during the Homestead Strike by a Russian Jew, Alexander Berkman.⁶⁹ The press only rarely mentioned "American Shylocks, English money lending Jews" and the "Jewish bankers, the Rothschilds,"⁷⁰ and this was only incidental in the discussion of the money question. Kolb was too involved in fraudulent election charges to be deeply concerned with money problems, and his speeches are free of anti-Semitism. This may have also been due to the very small Jewish population of Alabama, which was little over 2,000 at this time.⁷¹

The Alabama Populist did not raise the issue of anti-Catholicism. The *Banner* showed concern in an editorial over the appointment of a papal representative in Washington, D. C. This was interpreted as a step toward "united and determined" assault on the public school system.⁷² The Populist attitude toward Catholics probably closely approximated that of the Democrats and it was not an issue in Alabama. The Catholic population was also small, numbering about 16,000 in 1893.⁷³

Racial moderation was not a characteristic of the Populist

⁶⁷Ward and Rogers, *Labor Revolt*, 120.

⁶⁸*Ibid.*, 100.

⁶⁹*Ozark Banner*, July 21, 28, August 4, 1892.

⁷⁰*Ozark Banner*, February 8, March 16, 1892; *Montgomery Alliance Herald*, July 7, 1893.

⁷¹Thomas McAdory Owen, *History of Alabama and Dictionary of Alabama Biography* (Chicago: S. J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1921), II, 814.

⁷²*Ozark Banner*, December 15, 1892.

⁷³*Memorial Record of Alabama* (Madison, Wisconsin: Brant and Fuller, 1893), III, 241.

campaigns in Alabama. The Populist candidates needed the Negro-labor minority vote to get elected. Looking back, the Democrats offered nothing to the Negro, but viciously exploited his vote and then disfranchised him by the Constitution of 1901.⁷⁴ Had the Populist reform effort been successful, one could judge whether they were actually sincere in their campaign promises to the Negro. Since the Populists never controlled the state government, one can only speculate. Negro activity within the Populist hierarchy in Alabama did not exist. At the fusion convention in 1894, the "Lily White Republicans" and Populists endorsed the Jeffersonian-Democratic ticket. But when William Stevens, capable Negro leader of the "Black and Tans," appeared before the convention and requested the opportunity to endorse the Populist platform in behalf of his people, he was "unceremoniously put out."⁷⁵ There is no reason to believe that Negro participation at party levels would suddenly have appeared after victory.

In Reuben Kolb's appeal to the Negro and white farmer vote, there was not the "you are kept apart that you may be separately fleeced" approach of Georgia's Tom Watson. There was not the active Negro participation in party ranks which appeared in Georgia, nor was there the explicit concern for the Negro's interest expressed by Watson in his early campaigns.⁷⁶ Whatever a revision of Georgia Populism might prove, its racial policy was liberal compared to Alabama.

The Alabama Populists had on two occasions, once in 1892 and again in the spring of 1893, proposed that the Jeffersonian and Bourbon factions settle their disputes by a white Democratic primary. The Populists were willing to forsake the Negro vote in the primary in order to meet the Democrats on more equal terms. The Democrats refused the reconciliation offer.⁷⁷ A Populist newspaper commented: "this ends all

⁷⁴McMillan, *Constitutional Development*, 352.

⁷⁵Clark, *Populism*, 152.

⁷⁶C. Vann Woodward, *Tom Watson: Agrarian Rebel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969, First printed 1938), 220-221.

⁷⁷Jones, "Direct Primary," 211, 218-219; *Columbia Breeze*, May 4, 1893, quoting *Atlanta Journal*.

claim to white supremacy on the part of the 'organized' Democracy in this state, henceforward their strength will consist of stolen ballots in the Black Belt."⁷⁸ Had the Populist faction been able to win control of the state government with fairly cast and fairly counted Negro votes, they would have logically continued to oppose legislation which would have disfranchised Black people.

The Populist party offered to the Negro his best opportunity for respectable integration into active political participation in Alabama. Political cooperation would have been a progressive step in race relations. But on the other hand, Negro disfranchisement was the wave of the future in the South. Mississippi perfected her plan before the third party threat, and although the responsibility for Alabama disfranchisement is placed on the Populist movement,⁷⁹ her regressive racial policies indicate that she would not long have resisted the trend of legally eliminating the Negro as a political entity.

⁷⁸Tuscaloosa *Vindicator*, June 14, 1893, quoted in Jones, "Direct Primary," 221.

⁷⁹Joseph H. Taylor, "Populism and Disfranchisement in Alabama," *Journal of Negro History*, XXXIV (October, 1949), 410.

A PROPOSAL FOR WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE IN ALABAMA IN 1867

by

Sarah W. Wiggins

The suffrage question has been one of the most thoroughly studied topics in Alabama Reconstruction, especially the racial aspects of the issue.¹ However, historians have said nothing about women's suffrage because the source materials for the period give the impression that while Alabamians were much concerned about Negro suffrage, they were generally oblivious to the possibility of women as voters. It is, therefore, startling to discover a serious proposal advocating that the franchise be extended to women during the Reconstruction years. And even more startling is the person who introduced the proposal.

The suggestion that Alabama amend her constitution to allow women's suffrage was printed in the Demopolis *New Era* on March 20, 1867, two and a half weeks after the U. S. Congress had passed the first Reconstruction Act. This act provoked an uproar in the South because it included provisions to enfranchise the Southern black population. The air was rife with ideas to ameliorate the drastic effects expected from the new suffrage arrangements. Since most Republicans in Alabama at this time expected black enfranchisement to strengthen them, it is extraordinary that a Republican would view the suffrage qualifications of the Reconstruction Act as so unfortunate as to suggest that women's suffrage might improve the situation.

The author of the idea was Pierce Burton, a Massachusetts carpetbagger who came to Demopolis as an agent for the Freedmen's Bureau. He served in the 1867 Constitutional Convention and in February, 1868, was elected to the Alabama House of Representatives, where he served until 1871. In 1870 he was defeated as Republican candidate for lieutenant governor, along with the rest of the Republican state ticket. From

¹The author wishes to acknowledge assistance from the University of Alabama Research Committee for aid for a broader project of which this study is a part.

1869 to 1871 he edited the *Southern Republican*, a newspaper published at Demopolis.² In March 1871, the *Southern Republican* abruptly ceased publication because, according to a note signed and published by Burton, the paper had changed hands, politics, and location "owing to a combination of circumstances."³ A witness before the congressional committee investigating the activities of the Ku Klux Klan later that year explained these "circumstances" by testifying that Burton was severely beaten in Eutaw and received a Ku Klux warning to leave the area in twenty-four hours. He left three days later.⁴

Burton's idea was publicly ignored in 1867, and he made no effort to explain why he suggested the idea or to promote it either in private correspondence or in the *Southern Republican*. However, the article in the *New Era* did catch the eye of the *Livingston Journal*, although it made no reference to the article at this time. The *Journal* reprinted the proposal three and a half years later, and since copies of the *New Era* for March, 1867, no longer exist, it is only through the *Journal* that the proposal has survived. Interestingly, no Democratic newspaper endorsed the idea, and the *Journal* printed the proposal in 1870 only to embarrass Burton, then actively campaigning for the lieutenant governorship. The article was headlined "Pierce Burton on Female Suffrage" with the subheading "He would 'Rescue the Ship of State from the Flood of Ignorance now Threatening to Overwhelm and Engulf It.'" The *Journal* then introduced the article with a brief identification of the author and the source from which the proposal was copied.

With the desire to bring order out of the present political chaos, the following amendment to the Constitution of the State of Alabama is respectfully submitted for the consideration of all citizens who may be disposed to take action regarding the State Convention provided for in the new Military Bill:

²New York *World*, November 11, 1867; Montgomery *Daily Advertiser*, March 3, 1868.

³Demopolis *Southern Republican*, March 15, 1871.

⁴Alabama Testimony in Ku Klux Report, February 19, 1872, *Senate Reports*, 42 Cong., 2 sess., no. 22, IX, 1052.

“Article—Every citizen who has resided in this State for one year and in the county in which he or she offers to vote, six months immediately preceding the day of the election, and who can read the Constitution of the United States in the English language, and who can write his or her own name, or, who may be the owner of two hundred and fifty dollars worth of taxable property, shall be entitled to vote at all elections for Governor of the State, members of the Legislature, and all other officers elective by the people of the State; Provided, that no person, by reason of this article, shall be excluded from voting, who has hitherto exercised the elective franchise under the Constitution and laws of this State, or who, at the time of this amendment, may be entitled to vote under the said Constitution and laws.”

The pertinence of this amendment will be apparent upon a thorough review of the situation.

The new Congressional law enfranchises nearly every man over twenty-one years of age now residing in the State, without regard to color or race. There are no conditions or provisions about this, but it is already an accomplished fact which we should look at calmly and dispassionately, and boldly prepare to meet. There must be a Convention. There is no dodging that. That Convention must amend the Constitution of the State in such a manner that suffrage shall be conferred without any distinction on account of race or color, or it will not be approved by Congress. Now in order not to disfranchise a large number of citizens who have long been accustomed to the elective franchise, it will be necessary to continue the right of suffrage upon all who exercise it at the adoption of the Constitution. This will inevitably include all the men both black and white, over twenty-one years old now living in the state. But there is nothing to prevent prescribing qualifications to the exercise of the elective franchise for all who may *afterwards* become voters, and by adopting this proposed amendment, we at once enfranchise every intelligent woman in the State, without giving the ballot to an ignorant female of any color, *thus throwing the balance of power*

in favor of intelligence and virtue, the only safeguards of Republican Liberty.

It is not claimed that the ladies of Alabama claim this right. Although many of them own large estates, and hold a considerable portion of the wealth of the country, and have long endured taxation without representation; yet we have never heard of their murmuring or complaining on account of their disfranchisement. Nor is it supposed that they would exercise the right at every petty election, or whenever opportunity occurred, but they would be held rather as *reserve forces*, and when important questions arose in political affairs involving vital interests and principles, they would come forward and vindicate their patriotism by casting their suffrages in favor of right, justice, humanity, and progress, purifying legislation and sanctifying law.

The method of balloting could be regulated by the Legislature. That body could provide that it should not be necessary for ladies to even visit the polls in person, in order to deposit their ballots, but on each election day there should be placed before the judges of the election, a list of such as were entitled to vote. Each lady wishing to vote should enclose her ballot in an envelope directed to the judges, with a note stating that it was her ballot. If the judges found that the person whose name was subscribed to the note was entitled to vote, they should deposit the ballot and mark the name as having voted. The usual penalties for forgery should apply.

Thus, the ladies of Alabama, sitting in their homes, at their own writing tables, would wield the sceptre of the State, make and unmake magistrates, Judges, Governors and Congressmen, and check the tide of ignorance and corruption now turned loose upon us. Who can tell what happy results might follow, when every officer was aware that hundreds of bright eyes belonging to his constituents, were watching him from a hundred quiet homes!

England boasts but one Queen to rule the destinies of

her people, and nobly has she done her part. But under this amendment, as if by the magic touch of a fairy's wand, a thousand Queens would spring into existence in the State of Alabama, and by their mild and gentle sway, save the State to intelligence, to virtue, to honor, and to prosperity. We are in the midst of a gigantic revolution. Past forms and precedents are all swept away. New, bold and effective measures are required to meet the emergencies which are already upon us. Should we sit simply still without an effort to help ourselves? Is idleness so sweet, or inactivity so dear, that even the ladies of the South refuse to lend a helping hand to rescue the floundering ship of State from the flood of ignorance now threatening to overwhelm and engulf it? The hastening future will give a reply.

Here is an opportunity too, for the people of Alabama to lead the world in reform and progress. Will they do it?⁵

Of all the efforts to circumvent or nullify the voting requirements of Congressional Reconstruction in Alabama, this is the only proposal to suggest so radical an idea as women's suffrage. Since Burton never elaborated on his plan beyond his statements in this article, his reasons remain an intriguing enigma, and one can only speculate why a carpenterbagger would make such a proposal in Alabama in 1867.

⁵*Livingston Journal*, October 14, 1870.

POST CIVIL WAR MOBILE: THE LETTERS OF JAMES M. WILLIAMS, MAY-SEPTEMBER, 1865

edited by

John Kent Folmar

In 1858, James M. Williams, twenty years old and a native of Ohio, journeyed to Augusta, Georgia, and took a position with a mercantile firm as a watchmaker. Gradually his anti-slavery sentiments eroded, and he adjusted to the Southern "way of life." Williams married Elizabeth Rennison in 1860 and took her to their new home in Mobile, Alabama.¹ Enthusiastically supporting the formation of the Confederacy, young Williams enlisted in the Twenty-first Alabama Regiment. He was promoted for bravery at Shiloh and subsequently served in positions of command with the regiment in defense of the Mobile Bay perimeter at Forts Morgan and Powell.² In the latter months of the war, Lt. Col. Williams commanded the Twenty-first at Spanish Fort and during the evacuation of Mobile. After the cessation of hostilities, he was paroled in Meridian, Mississippi.³ Having returned to Mobile in mid-

¹Eleanor Williams (James' mother) to J. M. Williams, August 8, 1858, December 2, 1860, Williams Papers. The Williams Papers are used with the permission of Mrs. Louise Williams Chamberlin and Powell Williams, Jr., of Mobile, Alabama. The editor has chosen to follow the spelling, capitalization, and punctuation of the manuscript letters very closely and to inject interpolations into the text only when absolutely necessary.

James' father had recently migrated from St. Clairsville, Ohio, to Hamilton County in central Iowa.

²Willis Brewer, *Alabama: Her History, Resources, War Record, and Public Men from 1540 to 1872* (Montgomery: Barrett and Brown, 1872), 623-24; John Kent Folmar, "Lt. Col. James M. Williams and the Ft. Powell Incident," *Alabama Review*, XVII (April, 1964), 123-36; *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880-1901), Series I, Vols. X, XI, XXVI, XLII, *passim*, hereafter O.R.A.; *Mobile Daily Register*, January 22, 1903.

³Lt. Gen. Richard Taylor, commanding the Department of Alabama, Mississippi, and East Louisiana, surrendered to Maj. Gen. Edward R. S. Canby at Citronelle, Ala., on May 4, 1865. O.R.A., Series I, XLIX, 1283-84; unpublished sketch by Francis Kierman (Co. "D", 21st Ala. Regt.), dated Sept. 12, 1910, Military Division, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Ala.; undated application for membership in Raphael Semmes Camp of Confederate Veterans, Williams Papers.

May, Williams began to write to his beloved Lizzy who was living in central Alabama.⁴

In this correspondence, which continued intermittently during the summer, Williams' observations and comments are both informative and suggestive of the problems faced by white Mobilians after the Civil War. His primary concern is for the welfare of his family, therefore, he dwells upon the perplexities of economic conditions, particularly employment opportunities, the acquisition of much-needed funds, wages and rental costs, and the economic future of the port city. Although his "situation" was indeed precarious, it was not hopeless, and he did find local employment with wartime acquaintances. As most ex-Confederates, Williams accepted the verdict of war and resolved to "get on" with the rigors of adjusting to post-Civil War exigencies. Too, Williams' loyalty to his adopted region had not diminished.

Mobile May 16, [18]65

Dear Lizzy:

I have arrived in Mobile—am well—paroled—I will try to find something to do but I fear it will be very hard to make even a living—I have written to my father to send me some money as soon and as much as possible—as soon as I can make some arrangements for employment I will try to get leave to visit you, and have no doubt that I will meet with no obstacles.

I received your letter from the hands of Dr.—I forget his name, and you will ere thus have heard from me by some of my men who have gone to Prattville

I intended to have gone right through to Prattville [from Meridian] but concluded it would be wiser to see what can be done here before I visit you . . .

⁴When the defenses of the lower bay fell to Union forces in August, 1864, Williams sent his family to stay with friends near Prattville in central Alabama.

It will probably be two months before I can receive any help from father,—but unless he has been very unfortunate it will certainly come, in the meantime I must *work hard* if I can get it to do. Up to the time your letter came I was very uneasy about you as I knew that the enemy had been all around you—⁵ and I have no doubt that you was equally troubled for me—

The storm of battle has again spared me, and I thank our Heavenly father for his protection— I have many hair-breadth escapes to tell you of—and so much to say that it is useless to begin to write it— Lee is lost on this side of the Miss[issippi]—at least for a time— I am a prisoner of war— how long I will remain I can't tell—but a brave heart and willing hands will make me an honest living even here I hope— As a last resort I can give up my parole and go to prison and be fed by Uncle Sam until exchanged⁶—and I know that father has bread and meat enough for you and George—⁷ Williams.

A Yankee officer has been looking for me who says he is a neighbor to your brother. I hope I will see him—and get some news for you—⁸

Mobile May 17, [18]65

Dear Lizzy:

.

The city is full of Yanks black and white so far they have behaved well— The ladies do not associate with them and they

⁵In late March a Union cavalry force, commanded by Maj. Gen. James H. Wilson, had raided from north Alabama to Selma, and on April 12 Montgomery was occupied. O.R.A., Series I, XLIX, Part I, 98-332.

⁶In Williams' estimation the war had not ended.

⁷Williams named his son for George E. Dixon, a comrade-in-arms who was wounded at Shiloh. In February, 1864, Lt. Dixon commanded the Confederate Submarine *Hunley* in its ill-fated attack against the Union blockade in Charleston harbor. Brewer, 623; *Mobile Daily Register*, November 15, 1904; *Mobile Register and Advertiser*, April 12, 1862.

⁸Lizzy was a New Yorker by birth, and her brother still resided in Newburgh.

notice in their paper with no little chagrin that the gallants on Government street are all *gray*

How long the fair rebs will hold out is yet to be learned—if they are equal to those of New Orleans it will be a long seige⁹

Write often— Care of Mr. [James] Conning¹⁰

Williams

Mobile May 18, [18]65

Dear Lizzy:

The prospect is not very flattering, I have turned in to help Mr. [John A.] King with some work and it will help me along a little for the time being—¹¹ I hope that I will yet find regular employment—I wrote to my father . . . and have urged him to come down and see us—

Haven't heard from you yet— It is just after breakfast and Mr. King is waiting to carry this down town with him

Williams

Mobile May 21, 1865

Dear Lizzy:

Did not write yesterday—busy—for a reason— Helping John with a job he has taken to put Mr. L'Hommedieu's stock

⁹Williams is referring to the widely publicized refusal of New Orleans belles to fraternize with the occupation troops after the city fell to Union forces in April, 1862.

¹⁰When Williams came to Mobile from Augusta, he was employed by Conning who owned the largest jewelry firm in pre-war Alabama.

¹¹King was a warm friend and a fellow officer in the 21st Ala. Regt., and he was also critically wounded at Shiloh. James M. Williams to Lizzy, April 8, 1862; *Mobile Register and Advertiser*, April 12, 1862.

in order—work at home—don't know how much am making till the job is done and paid for—a living temporarily any how—

Every day I realize more vividly the fact that business here is utterly ruined for a long time to come; those who were rich are poor now as myself I begin to despair of regular employment and fear that my only dependence is on my father, . . . when . . . [the money] . . . comes we must emigrate, as soon as the enemy release me from my parole—my father will probably urge us to go to him perhaps it will be the best, . . . Mr. Conning does not seem to know what he will do—if he resumes business, which is more than doubtful, he will probably give me present employment—I am working hard and waiting for something to turn up, in a week or ten days our job will be done, and at the end of that time I hope I'll have currency enough to go to see you, and leave my board bill paid—¹²

. . . I regret to think I did not go to Prattville direct from Meridian as was my intention up to the time Dr. B. gave me your letter—I felt easy about you when that came, and my pride forbade me to go to you without a dollar of good money Sometimes I fear that I will [not] hold my own here—but I am determined not to be discouraged—

Williams

Mobile July 25, [18]65

Dear Lizzy:

Pa has not come and there are no letters accounting for it—I found upon my arrival a number of letters [from him] which I send you— . . . I got here last Thursday evening [from Prattville] Friday I was offered two situations— Saturday (being under the influence of the letters which are urging me to go North) I declined both—

¹²Williams visited Lizzy soon after this letter was written. Note the date of the following letter and the reference to adjusting to "town fare" in the August 1 letter.

Sunday I wore my studying cap—and the result is that today I am about to make a contract with Col Cary Butt to stay with him until spring¹³

The reasons that influenced me are— First I calculated that I would not be able to reach Iowa before the first of September: then the winter will be upon us and I can do little or nothing until spring— While by remaining here I can at least make a living for myself and you—

Second— . . . it may be that if I let the present opportunity slip— I will regret it and be compelled to remain after all and be out of a situation entirely—or be compelled to work for less wages than I can now obtain—

Hundreds are idle here and it is not certain that I can go to work just when the necessity may press upon me—

Pa will likely come along soon, . . . however I think it will be better for you to go home with him— . . . it will not pay us to commence house-keeping here—even if I had the money—boarding is almost out of the question as too expensive— I have no doubt that for the present you can make arrangements to stay with your lovely friend Mrs W[ainright] and I can after paying the little debts I have to contract today send you at least \$50 per month¹⁴

.

I send you all I could raise money to buy (I have about sixty cents left.)

The Calico dress cost 40 c[en]ts per yard—the Domestic 62½ [cents per yard]—I bought the best I could find (25 yards)—The corsets [\$]2.00—they were not down on the memorandum—shoes for George and Joe [?], [\$]1.75 each—could

¹³Carey W. Butt commanded Company D in the 21st Ala. Regt. until he was seriously wounded at Shiloh. Brewer, 624; *Mobile Register and Advertiser*, April 12, 1862.

¹⁴Lizzy was living with the Wainwrights.

not find and [any?] stockings for Jo [?] and none but the unbleached for George—50 c[en]ts pair— Yours cost [\$]1.00 per pair— I forgot shoes for you until my money was all gone—will send them up after while.

I will write regularly to you care of Mr W[ainwright] until you let me know that the Prattville mail is open—

. . . Tell me how George's shoes fit and Joe's [?] and how he likes them—when you want anything let me know and I will send them up [the Alabama River] by the [steamboat] Coquette.

.

"Uncle Jim" [Wainwright] will probably go home on to-day's boat, if he don't, Capt Dargan will deliver this package at the [Washington] landing—

.

~~Spank~~ Kiss George for me

Williams

Mobile Aug[ust] 1, [18]65

Dear Lizzy:

I have a letter from Bella which is enclosed¹⁵ From it we learn incidentally that my father is not coming: the draft has not come yet but I suppose it will be along in a day or so—

. . . I have not yet taken a boarding house— board is \$12 per week— if I thought of remaining longer than spring I would rent and furnish a house— but even that would be a pretty heavy business the way prices range now— I think it will be best for you to remain in the country (where you can prob-

¹⁵Bella (Isabella) was Williams' sister.

ably live much cheaper) at least until fall— But in this matter I want you to determine for yourself— If you conclude to stay you had better let our friend Mr W[ainwright] have the use of all the money that you can conveniently spare But if you come down we will want it probably all—

If it was not such a long road I would like to have you go to Iowa and wait for me there.

I sent you a [Godey's?] lady's Book for August a few days ago and have written several times to Montgomery—

You can mail letters for me at Montgomery— or by putting them on the Coquette at Washington landing—

I intended to have written to you by the Coquette today, but was so busy that I couldn't find time before she left.

I am still stopping with Dr. Savage.—¹⁶ My appetite all left me when I exchanged Mrs. W[ainwright's] table—(corn particularly) for town fare— but its is coming back again—

Williams

Mobile August 5, [18]65

Dear Lizzy:

I have just received a letter from you and it pains me to know that your eye is no better. Please be careful with it and dont work until it is well I send you all the money I have, and soon as Pa's check comes [I] will give you plenty.

A letter which came yesterday post-marked Newburgh[h, New York] and addressed to you, I took the liberty to open— thinking that it was from your brother—

¹⁶T. J. Savage, a physician, lived at 13 North Conception Street.

I have written to him to-day and answered his questions as well as I can.

I would write oftener but am so very busy that I hardly get time to eat: . . .

Williams

Mobile August 9, 1865

Dear Lizzy:

I received two letters from you this morning— [August] 4th & 6th . . . I believe you had better come down when my money comes and “d—n the expense”

. . . I sent the dutch cheese for you down to the Coquette last evening—but the river is so low I don't think she will get to Montgomery this trip—

I am uneasy about your eyes and on their account particularly I wish you were here to have them properly treated I have snatched a minute to write in the midst of a great hurry of business— frequently I work hard until 9 or 10 PM—

Williams

Mobile Monday morning Aug[ust] 14, [18]65

Dear Lizzy:

.

Every-thing is moving along in the accustomed channels, and as my place is in the main current [of business] I am hustled along rapidly from morning 'til night and Monday to Saturday: until, sometimes, with all my boasted powers of *Leg* I am a little tired out not to say *played-out*: . . .

.

I have been trying to get a small furnished house— but find very few, and them at prices beyond reach of my short, persimmon pole— Rents are crazy R.D. Williams says he will have to pay [\$]700 for his little house this year—¹⁷ that is a sample.

Williams

Mobile Aug[ust] 24, 1865

Dear Lizzy

Letters from Iowa to the 11th, but up to the time they were written my father did not know that the little old \$250 — draft was missing: . . .

This is a fine invention for saving money: for if I had had it there would have been more than one hole, little and big in my pocket, to mark the place of its exit!

I hope the matter has not been bungled up so as to cause me another month's delay, but even that is possible— . . . I send you enclosed \$10, two or three weeks ago I sent you \$2 in a letter— did you get it?

Williams

Mobile August 27 1865

Dear Lizzy

This is a beautiful Sunday morning, after the long and refreshing rain the air is like the early — glorious days of Spring— It carries me back to the happy days in Augusta when we used to go for a walk on lower "Broad street" and up the aristocratic "Green"

¹⁷R. D. Williams worked for Thomas P. Miller and Company, a banking-brokerage firm.

After that came the long and tedious war—and my promenades were made to the sound of drum and fife—they had their charm for me too, though they involved absence from you and poverty for us both. now the bright days are coming again—we can be together, and George's prattle will add a new interest to the future walks upon the shady side of Government Street, or the plain broad prairie road [in Iowa]— . . . In my letter of the 24th I sent you \$10 for pen money—it was all I could spare after paying my debts—you know I borrowed money when I first came down to buy a few things for you and some shirts &c for myself—if I don't hear from my money by the last of this week, I will borrow all that I can and send it to you (on Saturday say) by Express to Montgomery; . . . It then should be in the office of the "Pioneer Express Co" Montgomery on Monday the 3rd of September.

.

Outside of the cotton business there is great stagnation and I am informed that many in the city are in want—It is astonishing that with such a state of affairs everything should remain at high figures—the Gov[ernment] authorities have now stopped all cotton from coming to the city, and if this is kept up for any length of time we will feel the loss of our single prop—

Williams

Mobile Monday Morning

7 o'clock, Aug[ust] 28, [18]65

Dear Lizzy

The safe is not yet open, my books and papers can't be got at and work commenced until the cashier arrives, which is momentarily expected. So while the "freedman" is sweeping out momentarily expected So while the "freedman" is sweeping out and raising a dust so thick that it may be felt and sliced up with a knife if necessary—I'll write—. . . I have long promised Mr. R.D. Williams and Mrs. Parrott that I would take

them down to view the ruins of the explosion, and yesterday being a cool day we went I myself had not been over the ground since the fire was burned out, and was astonished at the mass of shot and shell—entire and in fragments, that covered the ground—thousands of loaded shells are there yet among the rubbish— . . .¹⁸ Am well only pricked all over intolerably by “Heat”—

Williams

Mobile August 29, 1865

Dear Lizzy:

I have a letter from Mr. King dated the 11th. He is already sick of Yankeedom and Yankees, . . . he says he would “rather be called a fool than a Yankee”—I can’t say that I would fancy either appellation— . . .

The Yanks have stopped the shipment of Cotton to Mobile, and if it continues for much time we will all have a plentiful lack of work and money too—don’t anticipate such a case however.¹⁹ On the first of October I will go into another business—M Trheefoot [Threefoot] is about to open a wholesale variety store, and he has succeeded in inducing me to make a permanent engagement with him—at \$2000 per year.

Nothing new—

Williams

¹⁸On May 25 a tremendous explosion had occurred in the ordnance depot which the Union occupation troops had established. The destruction was devastating in the section of town nearest to the bay. See Mrs. Hugh C. Bailey, “Mobile’s Tragedy: The Great Magazine Explosion of 1865,” *Alabama Review*, XXI (January, 1968), 40-52.

¹⁹Trade restrictions on cotton were intensified. As Williams predicted, the result was economic blight for Mobile. See Walter L. Fleming, *Civil War and Reconstruction in Alabama* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1905), 284-307.

Mobile September 10, 1865

Dear Lizzy

Haven't a word from you as late as the reception of my 29 Aug[ust] letter, so there are three or four to be reported on including the Express one enclosing \$183—

.

I have made no arrangements to secure a boarding house, and will not unless I know when you will be down, as I will not make myself responsible for anything until I am certain I wont pay for more than I want

I don't imagine there will be much trouble in finding board provided I pay the price— that, I have already said I am prepared to do—

. . . Have no further news from home—

Williams²⁰

²⁰Williams managed to adjust to the economic chaos of Reconstruction, and he lived a long and interesting life in the port city. After his death in 1903, the *Mobile Daily Register* of January 22 commented: "It would be well for the republic if every man were to mold his life to conform to the high ideals that inspired our friend"

BOOK REVIEWS

Fort Maurepas: The Birth of Louisiana. By Jay Higginbotham. (Mobile: Colonial Books, 1968. 104 pp. illus. \$4.95). *The Journal of Sauvoles: Historical Journal of the Establishment of the French in Louisiana* by M. de Sauvole. Translated & edited by Jay Higginbotham. (Mobile: Colonial Books, 1969. 70 pp. \$5.95).

Jay Higginbotham can hardly be considered an amateur historian after publishing eight books and numerous articles on the early history of the Gulf Coast, yet he combines the infectious enthusiasm of the true amateur with the breadth of research which is the hallmark of the mature scholar, qualities most happily displayed in his two latest volumes which, taken together, make a significant contribution to the literature on the French occupation of the Gulf Coast.

Fort Maurepas provided an over-view of the first French settlement established by Iberville, in 1699, on the bay of Biloxi. Far from being the stronghold dominating the Mississippi River which Iberville had hoped to create, Fort Maurepas was a last-chance gamble which turned out much better than could have been expected. Although the post served as the center of French coastal and inland operations only until 1702, those years provided Iberville and Bienville with the knowledge of regional geography upon which the founding of both Mobile and New Orleans depended. They were also the years in which a lasting friendship was sealed between the French and the Indians of Louisiana—an amity which not only shielded but fed the hungry French garrison.

The LeMoyne brothers were men of action: Iberville commuting between his infant colony and its mother country, Bienville exploring the turns of the great river and its countless tributaries. The daily business of Fort Maurepas was the concern of its commandant, Ensign Sauvole, a man without other name or reputation, but an officer whose competence is proven by his maintenance of a secure base for the adventures of his more famous compatriots, and whose death in the dull

line of garrison duty is sufficient to enoble him in the history of the Gulf Coast. *The Journal of Sauvole*, in reality two dispatches to the French minister Ponchartrain, describes the routine existence of the outpost in episodic detail. One can only wish Sauvole's reports had been ten times as long! The bare narrative is packed with excitement and stirs conjecture on every page. So much more might have been said about the cabin-boys sent out into the woods to learn the Indian ways, the chiefs who insisted upon the same ceremonial respect for their wives as for themselves, the troublesome *coureurs du bois* who wandered down from Canada, the endless worries about food and water which turned the welcome visitor into a most unwelcome guest at that isolated fort.

The pleasure provided by these two slender volumes derives primarily from the human element of history which they most successfully bring to the fore. Higginbotham writes with a clarity and precision which is exceptional in view of the difficult nature of his sources. To do the subject justice, however, his readers—and they should include everyone with any interest in the colonial phase of Gulf Coast history—must purchase both volumes, and they are apt to wish he had combined them into one more substantial tome. Such a course would have avoided the variant spellings of Penicaut and Penigaut, and might have persuaded the author to eschew some of the more dissonant literal translations in Sauvole's Journal. On the other hand, such minor complaints cannot detract from the real merit of Higginbotham's work; he continues to shed a warm luminosity upon the darker reaches of the Gulf Coast.

Robert R. Rea

Auburn University

Removal of the Choctaw Indians. By Arthur H. DeRosier, Jr., Knoxville, Tennessee, University of Tennessee Press, 1970. 208 pages. \$7.50.

Arthur DeRosier's REMOVAL OF THE CHOCTAW INDIANS is a slightly revised version of his 1959 University of

South Carolina doctoral dissertation. The bibliographies of both works are virtually identical, so while the dissertation was current eleven years ago, the book is essentially eleven years old. Prof. DeRosier has overlooked much of the relevant material that has appeared in the intervening years, and that which he saw had little apparent influence on his interpretations.

This is a book of many parts. It has sections dealing with the early history of the Choctaws, their social and political organization, and their relations with the U.S. government prior to the establishment of a firm policy of removal. Thus, as it should be, DeRosier considers a great deal more than the westward journey of the Choctaws. But removal, as it applied to the Choctaws, rested on the sum of the past experience of Indian policy, and here Prof. DeRosier failed to develop and analyze adequately the evolution of that policy and its administration.

Generally, DeRosier did not differentiate between policy and administration. When he did, as in his analysis of the Choctaw's trek west, he did it admirably. But in the bulk of his narrative he was content to show simply that various aspects of Indian policy periodically failed to work, and when he pursued the question of why they failed, his answer invariably was to blame Andrew Jackson, the "Indian hater." One gains no insight into the workings of the Office of Indian Affairs from this book. Superintendents, agents, and treaty commissioners pop in and out of DeRosier's narrative, but we are never told how they related to one another, to the Indians, or to Washington. We are not led to appreciate the outside forces working on the government's Indian policy, except for occasional references to an amorphous frontier public opinion. And prior to the general debates on removal in the 1820s, DeRosier does not sufficiently assess the role of Congress in the establishment or the administration of Indian policy.

While Andrew Jackson is the villain of the piece, John C. Calhoun is the hero. In a sense, DeRosier's praise of Secretary of War Calhoun is well deserved. The South Carolinian did indeed bring much needed reforms to the War Department, particularly to the administration of Indian affairs. But to

assert that everything in Indian affairs prior to Calhoun's accession to office was an "aimless, drifting, enept and patch-work program" (p. 40) is to ignore the work of several recent scholars, notably Reginald Horsman. Indeed, Calhoun's two-part policy of civilizing the Indians and acquiring their land was exactly Jefferson's policy.

More to the point, however, is DeRosier's anxiety to join the Jackson-the-Indian-hater school of historiography. This myth has become so pervasive and powerful as to assume the proportions of an article of faith. With evidence to the contrary, DeRosier willingly fell into line. For example, he quotes favorably Calhoun's call in 1818 for an end of the official definition of Indian tribes as independent nations. "Indians," DeRosier paraphrases Calhoun, "should be subject to the same controls exercised by the government over all other people living within its national borders." (p. 42.) The next year Jackson wrote Calhoun urging the adoption of this same policy, using virtually the same words, upon which DeRosier commented: "The vicious implications of [this] letter foreshadowed what the future would hold for the Indians once the quick-tempered western general won a prominent place in the government." (pp. 51-52.)

DeRosier seems to see the history of U.S. relations with the Indians as a series of fits and starts, with new policies introduced now and again by men like Calhoun, a voice of moderation, and Jackson, a westerner who used force to effect removal. Actually, both faced basically the same problem—how to execute a policy of expansion without destroying the Indians in the process. Both embraced the same solution—removal. And Prof. DeRosier has not satisfactorily demonstrated that Andrew Jackson was more ready to force the Choctaws across the Mississippi than was John C. Calhoun, or Thomas Jefferson.

In sum, Prof. DeRosier's book is disappointing. While he rightly sought to put Indian policy in its proper context as an issue of immense national importance, he failed to show how it evolved and how it was administered. These problems remain to be explored.

Michael D. Green

West Texas State University

In Search of Gulf Coast Colonial History: Proceedings of the First Gulf Coast History and Humanities Conference. Ernest F. Dibble and Earle W. Newton, eds.

Pensacola: Historical Pensacola Preservation Board, 1970.

The newly-organized Gulf Coast History and Humanities Conference held its first meeting at Pensacola in December 1969. The organization's overall purpose is to make an interdisciplinary study of a specific coastal area—the Gulf of Mexico from the Florida Keys to the Yucatan peninsula. The first conference limited itself to considering documentary and artifactual sources for the area between New Orleans and St. Marks during the colonial period. The published proceedings include five articles with individual round-table commentary.

The first three deal with available manuscript and published sources. Jack D. L. Holmes's "Resources Outside the United States and Research Opportunities for Spanish Florida, 1781-1821" discusses the principal Spanish archives containing Gulf Coast material and suggests largely ignored topics—slavery and education, for example—awaiting scholarly investigation. Robert Right Rea's "Resources and Research Opportunities for British West Florida, 1763-1781" is a delightful survey of the historiography of this province. There is also a helpful discussion of the sources in foreign and domestic archives. One is struck by the richness of the primary sources, that they have been little used, and that the originals usually are in English, Scottish, or Canadian archives. The holdings of the William L. Clements Library (Ann Arbor, Michigan) are the chief exception. Samuel Proctor's "Bibliographical Resources in the United States for Gulf Coast Studies," emphasizes what the previous articles did not: the enormous amount of material, printed and manuscript, available in this country. The addenda to his original paper describing archival sources is most important.

The joint article by Lucius F. Ellsworth and Donald H. Bragaw, "History in Three Dimensions: Applications in the Classroom," makes the point that historians tend to overlook:

artifacts can be as important as written sources. The authors discuss artifacts in the Pensacola area and their possibilities as classroom instructional aids.

Walter Rundell, Jr.'s "Building Research Collections" is a well-researched essay with much information of general interest. However, he does not deal extensively with problems peculiar to the Gulf Coast, and therefore his essay is of limited value for librarians and archivists who plan to expand their Gulf Coast history collections.

Holmes' Rea's, and Proctor's articles especially make this work so useful. Serious studies of colonial Gulf Coast history are all too rare, though fortunately this work itself presages a change for the better. Historians, librarians, archivists, and archaeologists all will profit by the critical discussion of sources in this work. Every library and archive interested in Gulf Coast history should have a copy.

J. Leitch Wright, Jr.

Florida State University

The Creek War 1813 and 1814. By H. S. Halbert and T. H. Ball. Edited by Frank L. Owsley, Jr. Tuscaloosa, Alabama, University of Alabama Press, 1969. 331 pages. \$8.00.

The Creek War of 1813 and 1814, published originally in 1895 in Chicago, Illinois, and Montgomery, Alabama, has been republished in 1969, with the University of Alabama Press' using the original plates of the Halbert and Ball book and adding an introduction, notes, bibliography, and index by the editor, Frank L. Owsley, Jr.

Henry Sale Halbert was born in Alabama in 1837, served in the Confederate Army, taught at Waco University and other institutions in Texas, Mississippi, and Alabama, and principally among the Choctaw Indians in Mississippi for fifteen years. For the last twelve years of his life he was a clerk at the State Department of Archives and History in

Montgomery, Alabama. Timothy Horton Ball was a teacher and a Baptist preacher. Born in Massachusetts, he spent many years in Clarke County, Alabama, concerning which he wrote in *A Glance into the Great Southwest or Clarke County Alabama, and its Surroundings from 1540 to 1877*.

The Creek War of 1813 and 1814 is concerned chiefly with the causes and the early stages of that conflict. The book's thesis, conclusively stated and borne out throughout the entire work, is that "the 'Creek War,' as waged by the whites against the Creeks, was out of all proportion as compared with the 'Creek War' as waged by the Creeks against the whites." In commenting on this approach, Dr. Owsley says that "Halbert and Ball achieved a balance and impartiality most unusual in accounts of Indian wars, especially those written late in the nineteenth century."

The book is most valuable to students of Indian social and political history, and because of the many anecdotes related, the details of human life described, it is extremely readable for anyone who might be interested in American frontier men and women. Its material is drawn from many secondary sources, principally Pickett, Clairborne, Woodward, and Meek, but also from letters and reminiscences, coupled with close first-hand study of the topography of the sites involved. The editor has further authenticated the whole picture of the struggle through manuscript material available in this country. He leaves it to future scholars to explore the numerous British and Spanish records bearing on the subject.

The general introduction to the tribes of the Muscogee-Creek peoples includes a review of the influential families of mixed blood whose presence was characteristic of the whole southeastern portion of this country. Also included is a refutation of the "here we rest" legend as the meaning of the tribal name "Alibamo," which signifies instead "gatherers of vegetation," that is, in clearing the land for agricultural purposes.

After a sketch of Tecumseh's visit to the Chickasaws and Choctaws, which the writers drew from "original and authen-

tic" sources, they turn to that celebrated chieftain's visit to the Creeks. Here they find much discrepancy among "good and in the main, reliable historians" (Clairborne, Lossing, Drake, Parton, and Pickett) as to the date of the visit and as to the content of Tecumseh's speech to the Creek warriors, particularly in his urging the slaying of women and children, and in his dramatic use of the comet of 1811. Pickett is quoted liberally in connection with the Battle of Burnt Corn, though "a more correct account of the topography, gained from personal observation, is here given to the reader." In this account the attack by the Americans under Colonel Caller on the Creek warriors is blamed for the subsequent terrible revenge taken by the Indians at Fort Mims.

On Fort Mims, the authors, after discrediting several widely accepted border war historians, accept Pickett's statements concerning the number of human beings in the stockade on that fateful date in August, 1813. According to him, there were five hundred and fifty-three people, including approximately one hundred children, in an area measuring about 260 feet square. (Dr. Owsley's note argues with this acceptance.) Speaking of the accounts in question, Ball quotes Chateaubriand of France as having once said of ancient writers, "The historians are greater liars than the poets." He concludes, "Surely, if we can get no more truth than this from our border historians, we may as well leave them and turn to the poets."

As Pickett wrote that he considered Alexander McGillivray the hero of his book, so Halbert and Ball would certainly consider William Weatherford the hero of their book. On good authority they assert that at Fort Mims he implored the infuriated Creeks to spare the women and children, that he left the massacre in great horror. And according to George Stiggins, a half-breed whose manuscript account of the beginnings of the war was of great assistance to Dr. Owsley in evaluating the work of Halbert and Ball, "William Weatherford never intended to join the hostile element of the Creeks, but was forced to support them when the hostiles captured his family and threatened to kill them unless Weatherford became a Red Stick. The "Alabama Weatherford," according to the authors, was not a furious savage thirsting for the

blood of the Americans. After Fort Mims he did not fight again for four months, and then not until the Creek Holy Ground, which he fancied a place of security for his people, was attacked by American forces. From here Weatherford was the last man to retreat, and the story of his wonderful leap into the Alabama River is defended by the authors against such detractors as General Woodward.

Another hero of *The Creek War* is young Jeremiah Austill, who after the fighting became a peaceful clerk at St. Stephens, a courageous deputy marshall for the federal government, a member of the state legislature from Mobile. His first adventures as the "night courier" who rode forty miles through hostile territory to warn General Claiborne of the frantic settlers' situation are followed by his exploits, along with Captain Sam Dale and James Smith, as one of the heroes of the great "Canoe Fight."

Saying that the story of the "Creek War" as fought by the whites against the Indians is fully treated in all of the works dealing with the career of Andrew Jackson, Halbert and Ball chose merely to give an outline of the engagements leading to the decisive Battle of Horse Shoe Bend, where Jackson is reported to have said, the Creek warriors have "penned themselves up for slaughter." In following to its conclusion their stated purpose of giving "justice to the Indians and justice to the whites," Halbert and Ball again state that the Fort Mims tragedy was surely provoked by the Burnt Corn action. In turn, they strongly feel that Fort Mims hardly justified the shedding in return of so much Creek blood, and that the even hand of justice surely did not require the ceding of the large domain west of the Coosa by the Creeks, to pay expenses, as claimed, of that subjugating war.

Martha Frazer Rankin
Montgomery, Alabama

Tennessee; A Short History by Stanley J. Folmsbee, Robert E. Corlew and Enoch L. Mitchell. (Knoxville: The University

of Tennessee Press, 1969, pp. xv, 640. \$15.00, paperback, \$8.95).

Tennessee has a long and fascinating history which is well told by authors Folmsbee, Corlew and Mitchell. Despite the fact that *Tennessee, A Short History* is a multi-authored study, it has been well enough edited that the slight changes in style do not bother the reader. Although the work is a condensation of a two-volume *History of Tennessee* (Lewis Historical Publishing Company, New York, 1960), the authors might have selected a more appropriate title—a 640 page book is not a very short history. They have produced a work which will satisfy the general reader and serve well as a college text for a course in Tennessee history.

The book has an exceptionally thorough account of the Colonial Period in Tennessee as well as good coverage of the Indians and their removal. In a state which produced three United States Presidents, the authors have properly given excellent coverage to politics. Tennessee was a major battleground of the Civil War and was the scene of more military actions than any other state west of the mountains. Political and economic Reconstruction is given ample consideration, and although the divisions within Tennessee were slow to heal, recovery was accomplished by 1900. The Twentieth Century has been marked by the rise of four major urban industrial centers in the state and a vast increase in its prosperity aided by T. V. A. and the development of a rich diversified economy.

Tennessee, A Short History is well printed and replete with pictures of both men and places. Of special interest to the student of history is the excellent documentation, suggested readings, and, above all, the outstanding bibliography of Tennessee history. Unlike some state and local histories, the authors have placed their study well within the framework of the region and the nation, making it a relevant contribution to the knowledge of American history.

Frank Lawrence Owsley, Jr.

Auburn University

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